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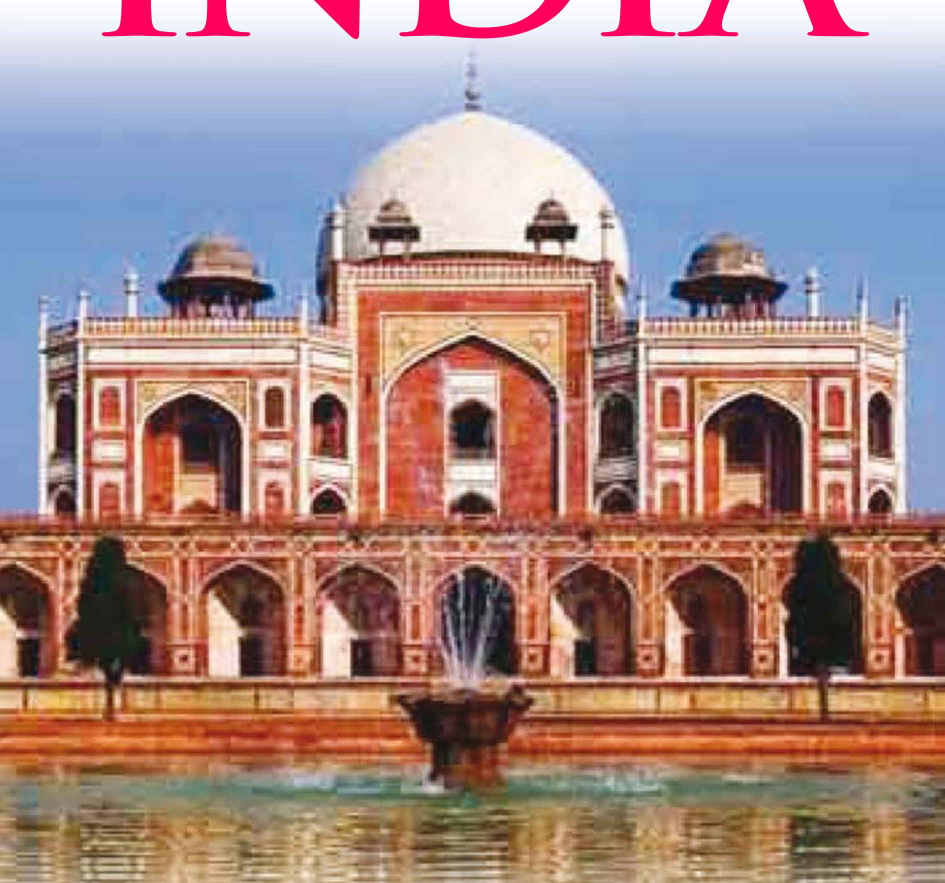

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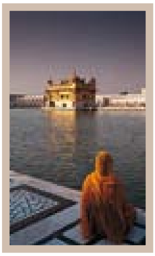
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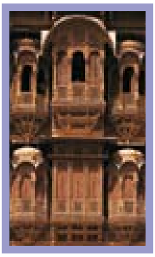
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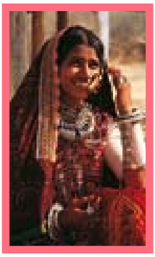
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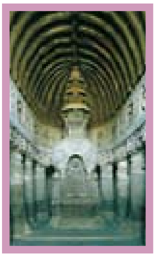
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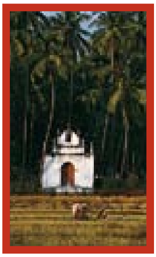
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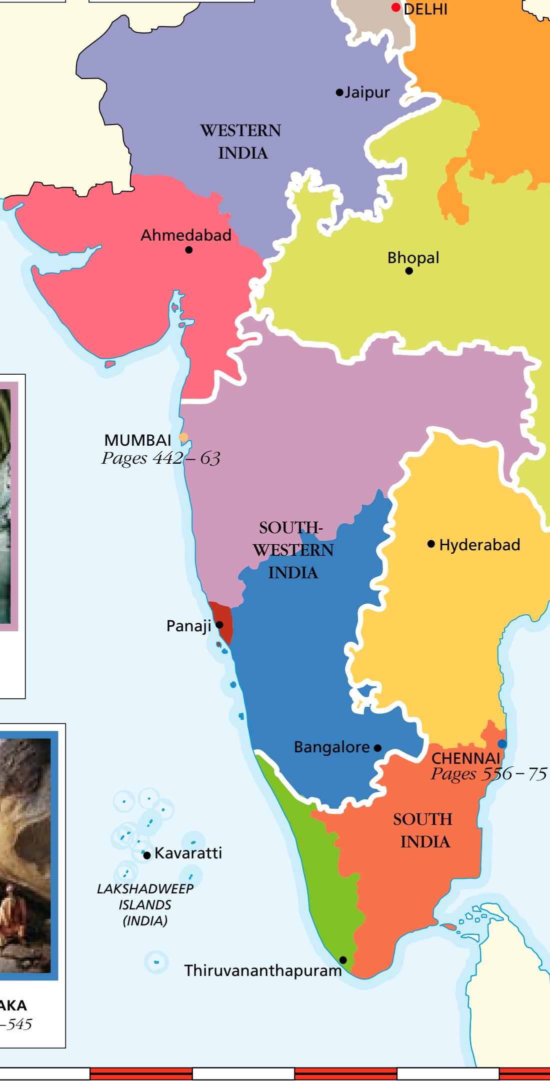
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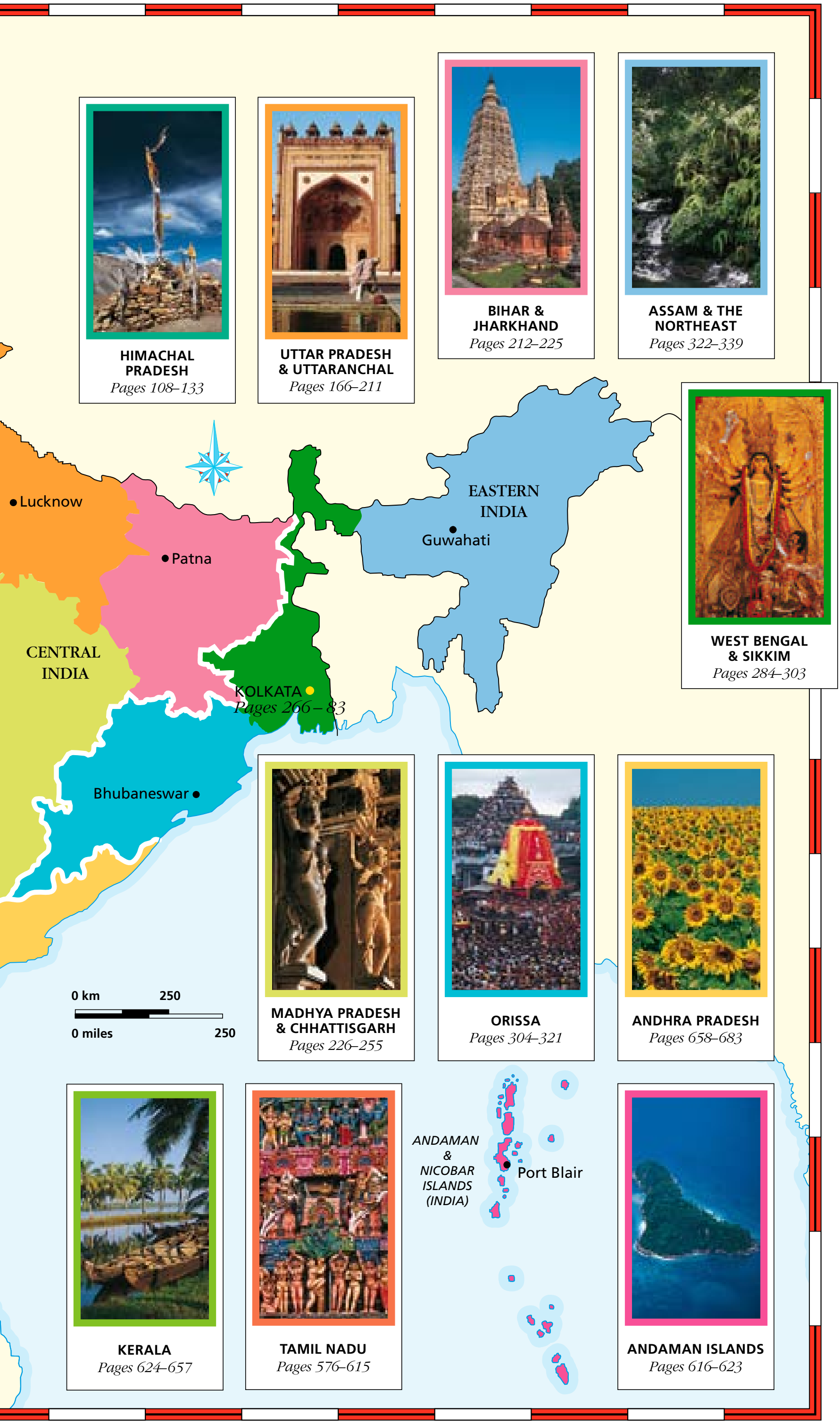
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Ashokan Capital, Sarnath

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Fruit vendors on the pavements of George Town, Chennai

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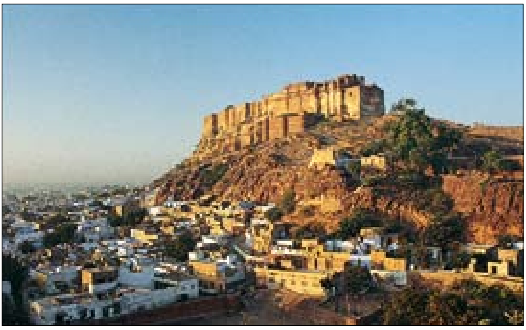
Mehrangarh Fort, towering over the city of Jodhpur

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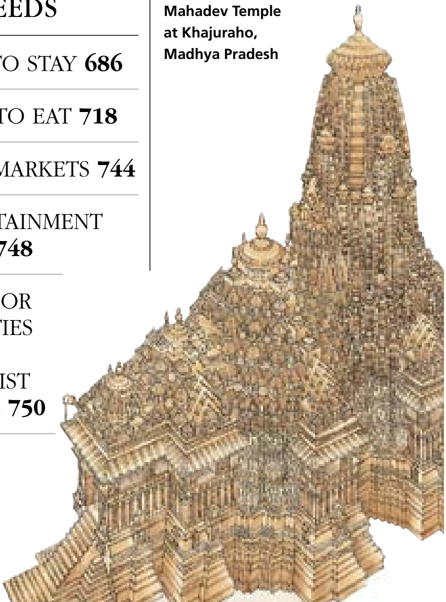
Kandariya Mahadev Temple at Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh

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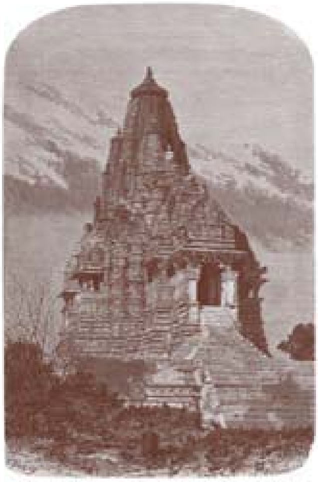

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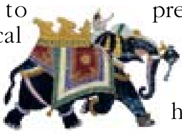
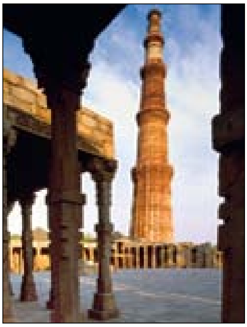
DISCOVERING INDIA

India is one of the most diverse nations in the world. In area, it is the seventh largest country and in population second only to China. Within its geographical confines, stretching from the Great Himalayas in the north to the tropical southern peninsular, there is a dizzying variety of cultures, languages, ethnic groups, beliefs and lifestyles that few countries or continents possess. The past is ever-present and centuries-old forts and temples happily coexist with the modern. The following six pages give highlights of each region, to help visitors make the most of this incredible country.


Intricately painted wall mural


The graceful Qutb Minar in Delhi, a UNESCO World Heritage Site

DELHI

- **Magnificent monuments**
- **Bustling Chandni Chowk**
- **Imperial grandeur of Lutyens's New Delhi**

Delhi, India's capital, lies at the heart of northern India and has been an important site for about 1,000 years. Remains of its past lie scattered within both Old and New Delhi. Among its famous monuments are the **Qutb Minar** tower *(see p94)*, **Humayun's Tomb** *(see p83)* – inspiration for the Taj Mahal – and the **Red Fort** *(see pp86–7)*, all UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Chandni Chowk's lanes in Old Dehli *(see pp84–5)* are filled with shops and eating places. Stop by for some country-renowned Mughlai cuisine at **Karims's** *(see p720)* near **Jami Masjid** *(see p86)*.

Imperial architect Lutyens designed much of New Delhi; begin a tour at **Rashtrapati Bhavan** *(see p74)*.

HARYANA & PUNJAB

- **The glittering Golden Temple in Amritsar**
- **Patiala's palaces and forts**
- **Vibrant crafts bazaars**

An area of flat plains and friendly towns, this region is also home to the glorious **Golden Temple**, the sacred shrine of the Sikhs *(see pp106–7)* and a must-see in the holy city of **Amritsar** *(see pp104–5)*. Another splendid city is the former princely state of **Patiala** *(see p102)*, with fine 18th- and 19th-century forts, palaces and gardens. The bazaars here offer a choice of the city's famed leather shoes *(juttis)* and embroidery *(phulkari)*. **Surajkund's** *(see p100)* famous crafts fair *(mela)* is held each February.

Architecture fans should not miss the region's capital, **Chandigarh** *(see p100)*, designed by Le Corbusier.

HIMACHAL PRADESH

- **Shimla: summer capital of the British Raj**
- **Little Tibet**
- **Scenic treks**

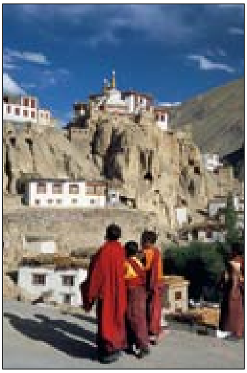
Shimla *(see pp110–12)* is now the state capital and a walk through The Mall offers glimpses of charming 19th-century Colonial architecture. From the Ridge there are splendid views of the Himalayas.

In **Dharamsala** *(see pp122–3)*, the seat of the Dalai Lama, is the Tibetan enclave of McLeodganj. Here, the Government-in-Exile maintains the monasteries, performing arts centre and archives to keep the spiritual culture of Tibet alive. The state also offers great trekking options around the beautiful region of the **Sangla Valley** *(see pp118–19)* and the hill station of **Manali** *(see 128)*.

LADAKH, JAMMU & KASHMIR

- **Srinagar's houseboats**
- **Monasteries along the Indus**
- **Ancient caravan routes**

This Himalayan state is home to Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists. In the predominantly Muslim Valley of Kashmir, a paradise of rice fields and waterways, is **Srinagar** *(see pp154–5)*, where ornate houseboats can be seen moored on the lakes, and graceful


Buddhist monasteries against the dramatic landscapes of Ladakh

◁ Miniature painting of a Rajput prince, surrounded by female attendants in a garden pavilion

The Taj Mahal at sunrise, a sublime experience

shikaras sell flowers and vegetables on the backwaters. Ladakh, where the Indus flows, is a cold desert whose inhabitants practise Tibetan Buddhism.

This incredibly beautiful region is home to ancient monasteries such as **Alchi** *(see pp144–6)* and **Hemis** *(see p140)*. Ladakh's ancient caravan routes that linked India to the Silk Route now function as popular **trekking trails** *(see pp152–3)* or as tour routes, such as the one passing through the remote and intriguing **Nubra Valley** *(see p143)*.

UTTAR PRADESH & UTTRANCHAL

- **The superlative Taj Mahal**
- **Nawabi Lucknow**
- **Varanasi: City of Light**
- **The Great Himalayas in the Garhwal region**

Uttar Pradesh, one of India's largest and most populous states, is watered by the country's great rivers – the Yamuna and Ganges. Three great cities lie along these riverine paths: **Agra** *(see pp168–77)*, the city of the **Taj Mahal** *(see pp172–5)* and other magnificent monuments built by the Mughals; **Lucknow** *(see pp196–8)*, the city of the nawabs, is famous for its refinement, stately architecture and superb cuisine; and **Varanasi** *(see pp202–8)*, the world's oldest city and Hinduism's holiest place of worship.

The Great Himalayas in Kumaon and the **Garhwal** *(see p187)* are full of sacred peaks and provide excellent trekking terrain. Adventurers will love expeditions such as the **Gaumukh Trail** and the challenging **Curzon Trail** to the **Nanda Devi Sanctuary** *(see pp188–9)*.

BIHAR & JHARKHAND

- **The Buddhist Route**
- **Forests of Jharkhand**
- **Sonepur's elephant fair**

It was in Bihar that the earliest empires emerged, and this antique land derives its name from *vihara* or monastery. The Buddhist Route includes **Bodh Gaya** *(see pp222–3)* where the Buddha attained enlightenment; **Rajgir** *(see p220)*, where the Buddha lived and taught and the earliest imperial capital; and the great university of **Nalanda** *(see pp218–19)*. Jharkhand is made up largely by the Chhota Nagpur Plateau, a thickly forested area home to the Munda and Oraon tribes. **Palamau National Park** *(see p224)* offers glimpses of wildlife and some tribal villages. More local colour can be had at **Sonepur** *(see p216)*, where Asia's largest live-stock fair is held.

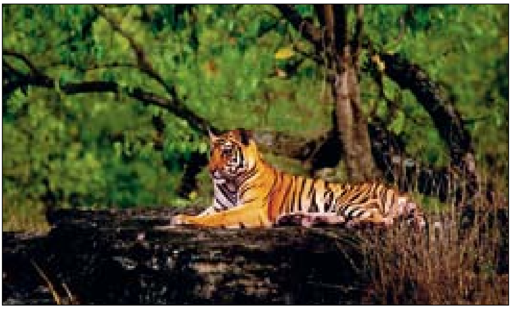
MADHYA PRADESH & CHHATTISGARH

- **The Great Stupa at Sanchi**
- **Khajuraho's temples**
- **Wildlife sanctuaries**

The hill of **Sanchi** *(see pp242–3)* is one of the best preserved sites of Buddhist India. Its crowning glory is the UNESCO World Heritage Site, the **Great Stupa** *(see pp244–5)* with its four impressive gateways and intricate carvings. The town's environs are also rich in ancient ruins.

Khajuraho's group of temples *(see pp236–8)*, also a UNESCO World Heritage Site, boasts not only splendid architecture, but a marvelous wealth of sculpture, including the much-talked-of erotic friezes. Its greatest temple is Kandariya Mahadev, dedicated to Shiva.

It is said that Rudyard Kipling set his classic, *The Jungle Book*, in the deciduous forests of **Kanha National Park** *(see pp254–5)*, still considered one of the best places to see the elusive tiger. The state's other important national park is **Bandhavgarh** *(see p239)*.



Tiger resting at the Bandhavgarh Park, Madhya Pradesh

Victoria Memorial, Kolkata's most celebrated landmark

KOLKATA

- **The Raj revisited**
- **Victoria Memorial**
- **India's oldest museum**

Kolkata, capital of the British Empire until 1911, saw a brilliant cultural and intellectual renaissance in the 19th century. At the heart of this fascinating city is **BBD Bagh** *(see pp270–71)*, which contains some of the finest buildings of the 18th and 19th centuries.

To its south is the **Maidan** park *(see p273)* and **Victoria Memorial** *(see pp274–5)*, the Raj's finest architectural legacy, named after Queen Victoria. On view here is an excellent selection of Raj memorablia. India's oldest museum, the 19th-century **Indian Museum** *(see pp276–7)*, has a superb collection of miniatures and stone and bronze sculptures.

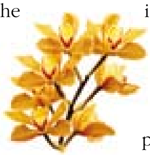
WEST BENGAL & SIKKIM

- **The Ganges delta**
- **Terracotta temples**
- **The eastern Himalayas**

West Bengal and Sikkim's varied landscape ranges from the steamy delta area to the icy Himalayas bordering Tibet. In the vast Ganges-Brahmaputra Delta is the **Sunderbans** *(see pp288–9)*, the world's largest mangrove swamp and habitat of the Bengal tiger.

The terracotta temples of **Bishnupur** *(see pp290–91)*, built in the 17th century, are unique and have no equal in India. The most famous is the richly decorated Shyama Raya Temple.

Traversing the Teesta River, the **North Sikkim Tour** *(see p300)*, which begins at **Gangtok** *(see p298)*, the capital of Sikkim, provides breathtaking views of the eastern Himalayas, including **Kanchendzonga** *(see p302)*, the world's third highest peak.



Orchid from Sikkim

ORISSA

- **Konark's Sun God temple**
- **Great bird-watching**
- **Temples of Bhubaneshwar**

This beautiful state of forests and coastline boasts an incredible artistic and cultural heritage and is the birthplace of one of India's most exquisite classical dances, Odissi.

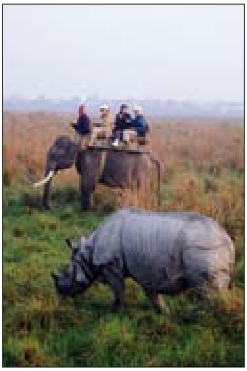
Konark *(see pp310–12)*, the temple to the Sun God, stands on the coast and is a marvel in stone. Built in the 13th century, it was conceived as a gigantic chariot. Further down the coast is the great lagoon, **Chilika Lake** *(see p316)*, a paradise for birds and aquatic life, especially dolphins. It is also noted for its seafood.

Bhubaneshwar *(see pp306–9)*, the state capital, is a city full of temples, including the impressive Lingaraj and the lyrical Rajarani temples. The city's environs are well known for their archaeological sites and craft villages.

ASSAM & THE NORTHEAST

- **Rhino-watching**
- **Tawang Monastery**
- **Colourful Kohima**

Seven states form this large and diverse part of India. The mighty Brahmaputra river flows through this area, dominating life in Assam. **Kaziranga National Park** *(see pp330–31)* lies on its banks and is home to the one-horned rhinoceros. **Tawang Monastery** *(see p327)* in Arunachal Pradesh is the largest Buddhist monastery in India and belongs to the Yellow Hat sect. Nearby is the Bramdungchung Nunnery, set in a landscape of snowy peaks and Monpa villages. **Kohima** *(see p339)*, the capital of Nagaland, is an introduction to tribal India as is evident in the boldly patterned textiles, dramatic woodcarvings and spirited dances. The War Cemetery here commemorates one of the most decisive battles of World War II.



Rhino-watching at Assam's Kaziranga National Park

Jaisalmer, one of the world's largest and most dramatic forts

RAJASTHAN

- **Jaipur & Amber**
- **Desert fortresses**
- **The Lake City of Udaipur**

India's most popular region for tourism, Rajasthan continues to haunt the imagination with its stark landscapes, fortresses and the colour and drama of its people. The 17th-century city of **Jaipur** *(see pp352–63)* is both picturesque and a shopper's paradise. Around **Badi Chaupar** *(see pp354–5)* are colourful bazaars, the **City Palace** *(see pp356–7)*, still the residence of the Jaipur kings, and **Hawa Mahal** *(see p352–3)*, the fanciful Palace of Winds. Crowning the crest of a hill just outside Jaipur is the magnificent old fort-palace of **Amber** *(see pp364–6)*. Dating from the late 16th century, this was the capital of the Jaipur rulers for almost 200 years.

In the arid Thar Desert is **Jaisalmer** *(see pp386–91)*, a town and fort built of gold sandstone. Among its many attractions are palaces and houses *(havelis)* that have been intricately carved like jewels. Jaisalmer also has a vibrant folk music tradition.

Around the shores of Lake Pichola is the fairytale city of **Udaipur** *(see pp398–401)*. Traditional *havelis*, palaces, *ghats*, temples and bazaars make this city and its equally interesting environs a rare experience. One of the world's great hotels, the **Lake Palace** *(see p705)*, is located on an island on the lake. Nearby is another small palace, Jag Mandir.

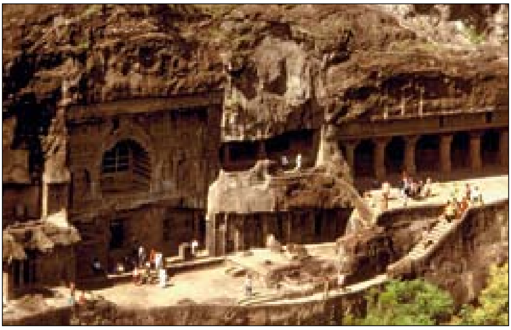
GUJARAT

- **Bustling Ahmedabad**
- **The stepwells of Gujarat**
- **Modhera's Sun Temple**

Gujarat's leading city and commercial and industrial centre, **Ahmedabad** *(see pp410–13)*, has a rich heritage. The Old City, a maze of towering gateways, bazaars, mosques and temples can be seen on a walking tour organized by the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation. The city's unique **Calico Museum** *(see pp412–13)* is also worth a visit for an overview of India's rich textile traditions. Beyond the city centre is **Sabarmati Ashram** where Mahatma Gandhi lived during the days of India's Freedom Movement.

Sculptures at the Rani ni Vav stepwell

Water scarcities have plagued Gujarat for centuries. An ingenious answer to this perennial problem were stepwells. These elaborately decorated underground wells conserved water as well as provided a cool place for social interaction. The finest, **Adalaj Vav** *(see pp414–15),* was built in 1499 by Queen Rudabai and boasts 800 individual sculptures. Others are **Dada Harir Vav** in Ahmedabad and **Rani ni Vav** in Patan *(see p417)*. The **Sun Temple at Modhera** *(see pp418–19)*, built in 1026, is laid out with astronomical precision. The temple's richly carved exterior and interior depict Hindu deities in great detail and are fine examples of medieval sculpture. Some of the most outstanding carvings can be seen on the walls and pillars of the inner sanctum.



The ancient rock-cut caves of Ajanta, near Aurangabad

MUMBAI

- **Magnificent Victoria Terminus**
- **Elephanta Island**
- **Bollywood magic**

Cosmopolitan Mumbai is a city of contrasts, where skyscrapers stand next to stately Victorian edifices. A walk through the eclectic **Kala Ghoda** district *(see pp448–9)* emphasizes this fact. Further north, **Victoria Terminus** *(see pp454–5)* is a riot of domes, spires and arches, and a star of Victorian Gothic architecture.

Off the coast is **Elephanta Island** *(see p461)*, with its 6th-century AD rock-cut temples dedicated to Shiva. Mumbai is also the home of India's vibrant film industry, **Bollywood** *(see pp32–3)*, and in sprawling **Film City** *(see p460)* extravagant, big-budget films are made.

MAHARASHTRA

- **Ancient frescoes at Ajanta**
- **Island-forts of the sparkling Malvan Coast**

The Western Ghats separate the slim **Konkan Coast** *(see pp438–9)* from the volcanic lava of the cotton-growing Deccan Plateau. The tradition of rock-cut caves was widespread in this region and at **Ajanta** *(see pp479–81)* visitors can see the world-famous 5th-century frescoes on Buddhist themes. **Ellora** *(see pp476–8)* has Jain, Buddhist and Hindu caves, the highlight of which is the **Kailasanatha Temple**. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, it is intricately carved out of a massive cliff. The picturesque Malvan Coast in South Konkan is dotted with sandy beaches, fishing villages and island forts, such as **Murud-Janjira** and Kolaba near **Alibag** *(see p466)*.

GOA

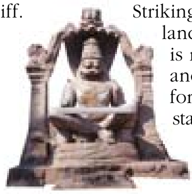
- **Portuguese flavour in Old Goa**
- **Panaji Old Town**
- **Idyllic beaches**

Goa is a tourist haven with stunning beaches, grand mansions, such as **Braganza House** *(see pp508–9)*, Indo-Portuguese culture and delicious cuisine. **Old Goa** *(see pp496–501)*, the first capital of the Portuguese, is a showcase of imperial Portuguese architecture, clearly visible in the state's cathedrals, churches and monasteries.

Panaji Old Town *(see pp488–9)*, especially São Tomé and Fontainhas, is typically Latin, with tile-roofed houses, gardens and restaurants. **Goa's beaches** *(see p491)* are splendid and stretch over 106 km (66 miles) from north to south.

KARNATAKA

- **Palaces of Mysore**
- **Hampi: a heritage site**
- **Bijapur's Gol Gumbad**



Narasimha sculpture at Hampi

Strikingly varied in landscape, Karnataka is rich in history and the arts. The former princely state was ruled from **Mysore**, a city which has lovely palaces, such as the 19th-century **Amba Vilas** *(see pp518–519)*. Nearby is **Srirangapattana** *(see p516)*, once the headquarters of Tipu Sultan.

Amid huge boulders near the Tungabhadra river are the evocative ruins of **Hampi** *(see pp530–33)*, once the capital of the richest kingdom in South India, the Vijayanagara Empire. To the north is **Bijapur** *(see pp542–3)*, where the Deccani sultans' superb artistic legacy can be seen in the monumental tomb, the **Gol Gumbad**.

One of Goa's many idyllic beaches

CHENNAI

- **Fort St George**
- **The Pantheon Complex**
- **Traditional Mylapore**

Chennai entered history as Madras, India's first British settlement, centred around **Fort St George** *(see pp560–61)* and nearby **George Town** *(see p561)*. Both contain fine examples of British Colonial architecture. The **Pantheon Complex** *(see pp564–5)* includes the Indo-Saracenic Government Museum, which has a rare collection of Buddhist sculptures from Amaravati, the Bronze Gallery and the Contemporary Art Gallery.

St Thomas, the apostle of Christ who came to India in AD 52, died in Chennai. The **Little Mount** *(see p573)*, where the saint was mortally wounded, has an imprint of his hand near the entrance. He is buried at the Gothic-style **Basilica of San Thomé** at **Mylapore** *(see p570)*, a busy, traditional quarter.

TAMIL NADU

- **The great Chola temples**
- **Spectacular Mamallapuram**
- **Charming Pondicherry**

In this state of great stone temples and lush rice fields in the Kaveri Delta, is the city of **Thanjavur** *(see pp596–9)*, where the Chola kings built the magnificent **Brihadishvara Temple** *(see pp598–9)*. In the same district are the temples at **Chidambaram** *(see p590)* and **Darasuram** *(see p593)*.

Along the Bay of Bengal, **Mamallapuram** *(see pp578–9)* was once a major port of the 7th-century Pallava kings. The dramatic Shore Temple sits precariously on the coast, while inland are the rock-cut **Panch Rathas** *(see pp580–81)*. **Pondicherry** *(see pp586–9)*, a former French colony, is also home to the Aurobindo Ashram.

Snorkelling in the waters off the Andaman Islands

ANDAMAN ISLANDS

- **Coral reefs and crystal clear water**
- **Sinister history of Port Blair**

An idyllic archipelago, the Andamans encompass several ecosystems including mangrove swamps, tropical forest and coral reefs. Glimpses of aquatic life can be had while snorkelling or scuba diving, especially around Jolly Buoy Island in the **Wandoor Marine National Park** *(see pp620–21)*.

In the 19th century the islands served as a penal colony; the Cellular Jail in **Port Blair** *(see p618)* is a dark symbol of those times.

KERALA

- **Sparkling coastline and picturesque backwaters**
- **Virgin rainforests**
- **Wooden architecture**

Kerala offers an appealing mosaic of landscapes and cultures, as well as some fantastic coastline. No visit here is complete without a **Backwaters Tour** *(see pp634–5)* through the labyrinthine network of lush waterways. In the virgin rainforests of the **Wynad District** *(see p654)*, glimpses of wild elephants and giant Malabar squirrels can be seen.

For an insight into the area's tumultuous past visit **Fort Kochi** *(see pp644–5)* in this bustling port-city. Also don't miss the **Padmanabhapuram Palace** *(see pp630–31)* one of the finest examples of Kerala's unique wooden architecture.

ANDHRA PRADESH

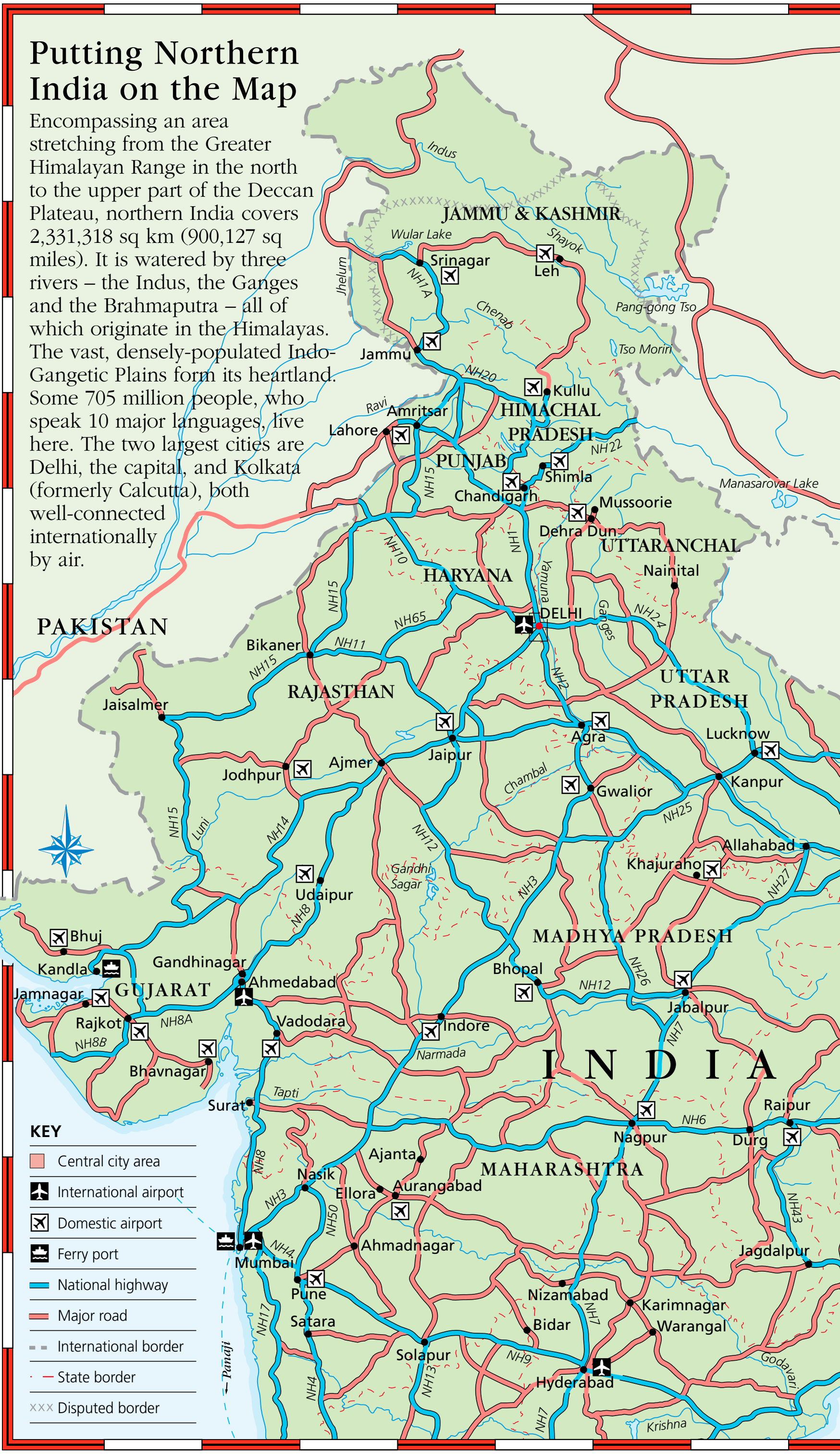
- **Hyderabad's Old City**
- **The ruins of Golconda**
- **Buddhist sites**

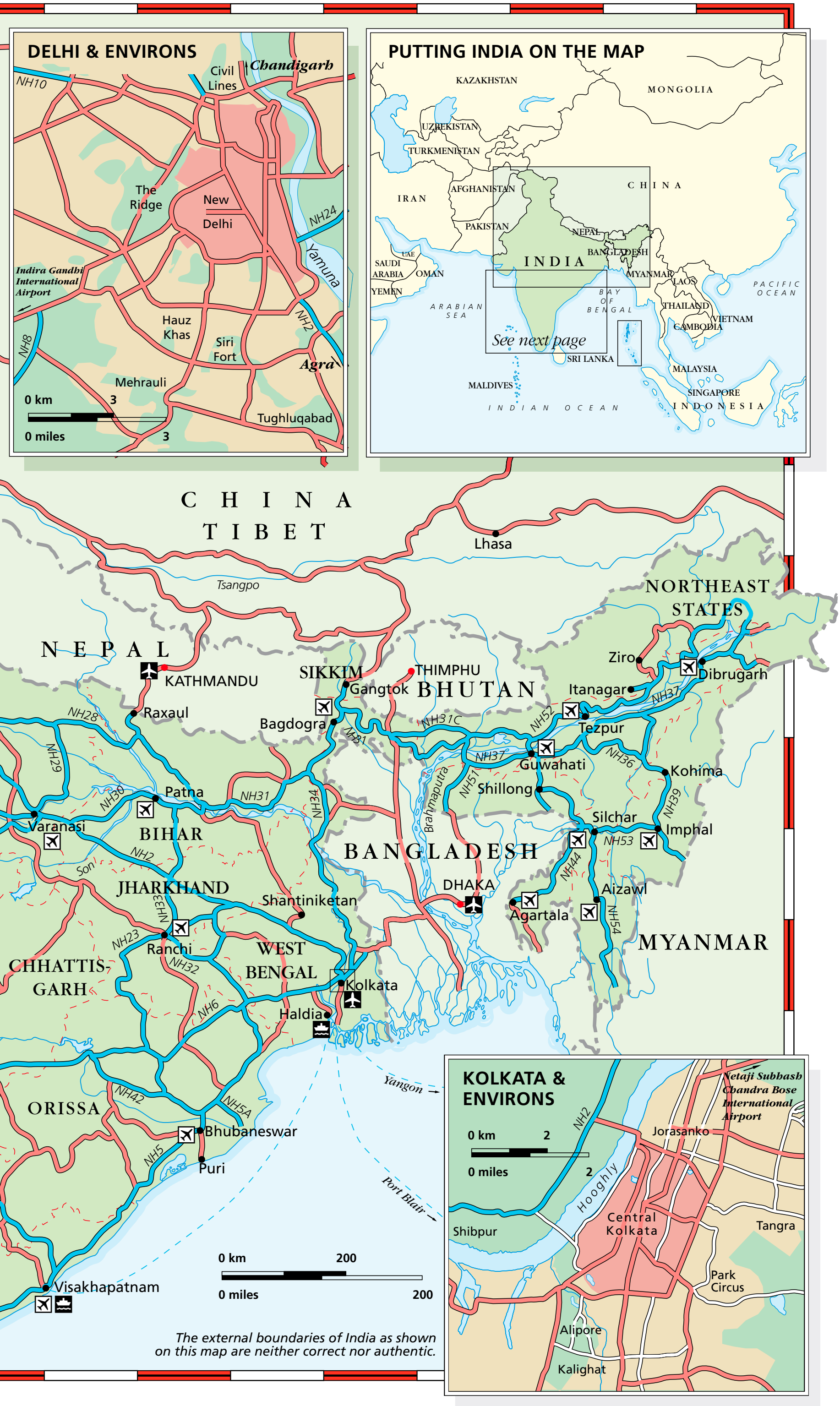
Hyderabad *(see pp660–65)* is a city of grand palaces, mosques and bazaars. The **Charminar** area *(see pp662–3)* is the best place to view the legacy of the city's incredibly rich Nizams. Outside the city are the vast ruins of **Golconda** *(see pp666–7)*, a legendary 16th-century citadel. Along the Krishna river are the remains of the state's Buddhist settlements at **Amravati** *(see p675)* and **Nagarjunakonda** *(see p676)*, named after a 2nd-century Buddhist philosopher.

The sprawling ramparts of Golconda Fort outside Hyderabad

Putting Northern India on the Map

Encompassing an area stretching from the Greater Himalayan Range in the north to the upper part of the Deccan Plateau, northern India covers 2,331,318 sq km (900,127 sq miles). It is watered by three rivers – the Indus, the Ganges and the Brahmaputra – all of which originate in the Himalayas. The vast, densely-populated Indo-Gangetic Plains form its heartland. Some 705 million people, who speak 10 major languages, live here. The two largest cities are Delhi, the capital, and Kolkata (formerly Calcutta), both well-connected internationally by air.

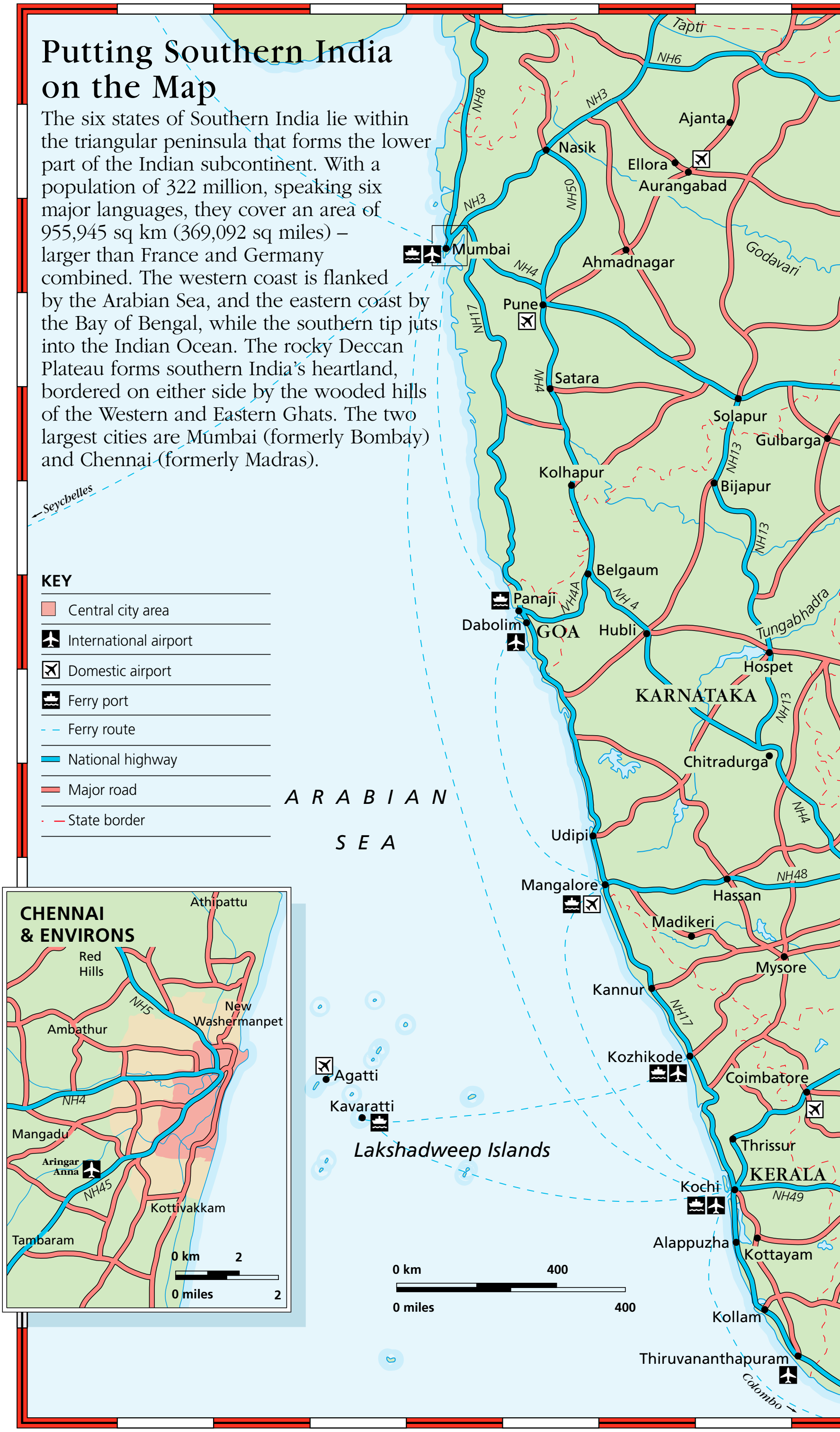

PAKISTAN
JAMMU & KASHMIR
HIMACHAL PRADESH
PUNJAB
HARYANA
UTTARANCHAL
DELHI
UTTAR PRADESH
RAJASTHAN
GUJARAT
MADHYA PRADESH
MAHARASHTRA
INDIA
Indus
Wular Lake
Shayok
Srinagar
Leh
Jhelum
NH1A
Chenab
Pang-gong Tso
Tso Moriri
Jammu
NH20
Kullu
Ravi
Amritsar
Lahore
NH22
Shimla
NH15
Chandigarh
Manasarovar Lake
Mussoorie
Dehra Dun
NH1
NH10
Yamuna
Nainital
Ganges
NH24
NH65
Bikaner
NH11
NH15
NH2
Jaisalmer
Agra
Jaipur
Lucknow
Jodhpur
Ajmer
Kanpur
Chambal
Gwalior
NH25
NH15
Luni
NH14
NH12
Allahabad
Gandhi Sagar
Khajuraho
NH3
NH27
Udaipur
NH8
Bhuj
Bhopal
NH26
Kandla
Gandhinagar
Ahmedabad
NH12
Jamnagar
Jabalpur
Rajkot
NH8A
Vadodara
Indore
NH7
NH8B
Narmada
Bhavnagar
Tapti
Surat
Raipur
NH6
Nagpur
Durg
NH8
Ajanta
Nasik
Ellora
Aurangabad
NH3
NH50
NH43
Mumbai
NH4
Ahmadnagar
Jagdalpur
Pune
Nizamabad
NH7
Karimnagar
NH17
Satara
Bidar
Warangal
Panaji
Solapur
NH9
Godavari
NH4
NH13
Hyderabad
NH7
Krishna
KEY
🟥 Central city area
International airport
Domestic airport
Ferry port
National highway
Major road
International border
State border
XXX Disputed border

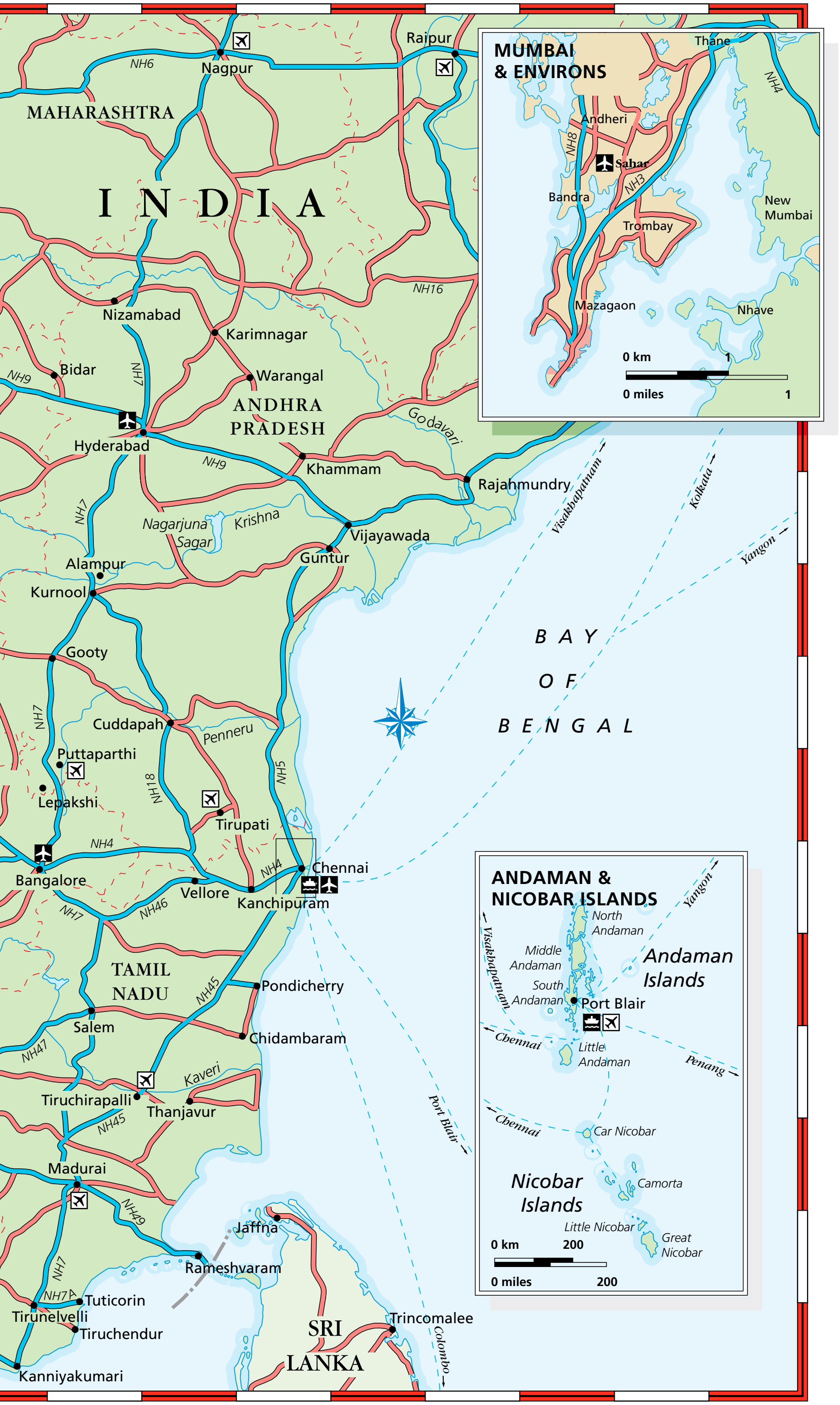

DELHI & ENVIRONS
Civil Lines
Chandigarh
NH10
The Ridge
New Delhi
NH24
Yamuna
Indira Gandhi International Airport
NH8
Hauz Khas
Siri Fort
NH2
Agra
Mehrauli
0 km
3
0 miles
3
Tughluqabad
PUTTING INDIA ON THE MAP
KAZAKHSTAN
MONGOLIA
UZBEKISTAN
TURKMENISTAN
IRAN
AFGHANISTAN
CHINA
PAKISTAN
NEPAL
BANGLADESH
UAE
SAUDI ARABIA
OMAN
INDIA
MYANMAR
LAOS
PACIFIC OCEAN
YEMEN
ARABIAN SEA
BAY OF BENGAL
THAILAND
VIETNAM
CAMBODIA
See next page
SRI LANKA
MALAYSIA
MALDIVES
SINGAPORE
INDIAN OCEAN
INDONESIA
CHINA
TIBET
Lhasa
Tsangpo
NORTHEAST STATES
NEPAL
KATHMANDU
SIKKIM
THIMPHU
Gangtok
BHUTAN
Ziro
Dibrugarh
Itanagar
NH28
Raxaul
Bagdogra
NH31C
NH52
NH37
Tezpur
NH29
NH31
NH37
Guwahati
NH36
Kohima
Patna
NH30
NH31
NH34
Brahmaputra
NH51
Shillong
NH39
Varanasi
BIHAR
Silchar
Imphal
NH2
BANGLADESH
NH53
Son
NH44
JHARKHAND
DHAKA
Aizawl
Shantiniketan
Agartala
NH33
NH54
NH23
Ranchi
WEST BENGAL
MYANMAR
CHHATTIS-GARH
NH32
Kolkata
NH6
Haldia
Yangon
ORISSA
NH42
NH5A
Bhubaneswar
NH5
Puri
Port Blair
Visakhapatnam
0 km
200
0 miles
200
KOLKATA & ENVIRONS
0 km
2
0 miles
2
NH2
Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose International Airport
Jorasanko
Hooghly
Central Kolkata
Shibpur
Tangra
Park Circus
Alipore
Kalighat

The external boundaries of India as shown on this map are neither correct nor authentic.

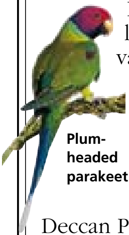
Putting Southern India on the Map

The six states of Southern India lie within the triangular peninsula that forms the lower part of the Indian subcontinent. With a population of 322 million, speaking six major languages, they cover an area of 955,945 sq km (369,092 sq miles) – larger than France and Germany combined. The western coast is flanked by the Arabian Sea, and the eastern coast by the Bay of Bengal, while the southern tip juts into the Indian Ocean. The rocky Deccan Plateau forms southern India's heartland, bordered on either side by the wooded hills of the Western and Eastern Ghats. The two largest cities are Mumbai (formerly Bombay) and Chennai (formerly Madras).


Seychelles
KEY
▨ Central city area
International airport
Domestic airport
Ferry port
Ferry route
National highway
Major road
State border
ARABIAN SEA
Tapti
NH6
NH8
NH3
Ajanta
Nasik
Ellora
Aurangabad
NH50
Mumbai
Godavari
NH4
Ahmadnagar
Pune
NH17
Satara
Solapur
Gulbarga
NH13
Kolhapur
Bijapur
Belgaum
NH4A
NH 4
Panaji
Dabolim
GOA
Hubli
Tungabhadra
Hospet
KARNATAKA
Chitradurga
Udipi
Mangalore
NH48
Hassan
Madikeri
Mysore
Kannur
Kozhikode
Coimbatore
Agatti
Kavaratti
Lakshadweep Islands
Thrissur
KERALA
NH49
Kochi
Alappuzha
Kottayam
Kollam
Thiruvananthapuram
Colombo
0 km 400
0 miles 400
CHENNAI & ENVIRONS
Athipattu
Red Hills
NH5
New Washermanpet
Ambathur
NH4
Mangadu
Aringar Anna
NH45
Kottivakkam
Tambaram
0 km 2
0 miles 2

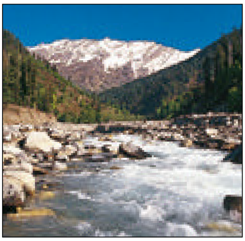

INDIA
MAHARASHTRA
ANDHRA PRADESH
TAMIL NADU
SRI LANKA
BAY OF BENGAL
Nagpur
Raipur
NH6
NH16
Nizamabad
Karimnagar
Bidar
NH9
NH7
Warangal
Hyderabad
Khammam
Godavari
Rajahmundry
Visakhapatnam
Kolkata
Yangon
Nagarjuna Sagar
Krishna
Vijayawada
Guntur
Alampur
Kurnool
Gooty
Cuddapah
Penneru
Puttaparthi
Lepakshi
NH18
NH5
Tirupati
NH4
Bangalore
Vellore
Kanchipuram
Chennai
NH46
NH45
Pondicherry
Salem
NH47
Chidambaram
Kaveri
Tiruchirapalli
Thanjavur
Madurai
NH49
Jaffna
Rameshvaram
Tuticorin
NH7A
Tirunelvelli
Tiruchendur
Kanniyakumari
Trincomalee
Colombo
Port Blair
MUMBAI & ENVIRONS
Thane
NH4
Andheri
NH8
Sahar
NH3
Bandra
Trombay
New Mumbai
Mazagaon
Nhave
0 km 1
0 miles 1
ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS
North Andaman
Middle Andaman
South Andaman
Andaman Islands
Port Blair
Little Andaman
Visakhapatnam
Chennai
Penang
Yangon
Car Nicobar
Camorta
Nicobar Islands
Little Nicobar
Great Nicobar
0 km 200
0 miles 200

Landscape and Wildlife



Plum-headed parakeet

India has an extraordinary diversity of landscapes and vegetation, supporting a rich variety of wildlife. The country is bounded on the north by the majestic Himalayas. Along their foothills, sweeping the breadth of Central India, are the fertile, densely populated Indo-Gangetic Plains, while the arid Thar Desert covers much of Western India. South of the Gangetic Plains is the Deccan Plateau, flanked by the hills of the Eastern and Western Ghats. India's 7,516-km (4,670-mile) long coastline borders on the Arabian Sea, the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal.



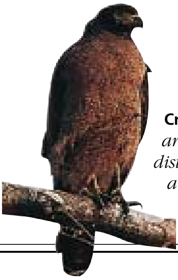
The Himalayan landscape *features snowcapped peaks, glacial streams and pine-covered slopes* (see pp64–5).

THE ARID WEST

The Thar Desert and the semi-arid scrublands adjoining it support a surprising variety of flora and fauna. The sand dunes of Rajasthan give way further west to the barren salt-flats and marshes of the Rann of Kutch.

Blackbucks *are among the swiftest animals, covering up to 80 km (50 miles) per hour.*

Asiatic lions, *once found all over northern India, are now seen only in the Gir Sanctuary in Gujarat* (see p423).



Crested serpent eagles *are large raptors with a distinctive pattern of black and white bands on their underwings.*

THE GANGETIC PLAINS

The rich alluvial soil of these vast plains, which stretch across India from the northwest to the east, has been cultivated for thousands of years. Today rice, as well as wheat, sugarcane and pulses are grown here.

Asian elephants *number only 45,000 in comparison to a quarter of a million African elephants, making this smaller species the more endangered one.*

Painted storks *migrate to lakes and swamps during their breeding season, between July and October.*

Wild boars *are common in most deciduous forests in India. The males have tusks and can be very aggressive.*

THE COASTS

The diverse landscapes of the coasts include sandy beaches in Goa and Kerala, fringed by coconut palms, coral reefs in the Andamans, and mangrove forests in West Bengal and Orissa. The east coast is often hit by cyclones.

Avocets *migrate to the coasts and marshes of Gujarat and Maharashtra in November.*

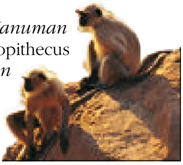
Starfish, *which cling tenaciously to rocks, can be seen in tidal pools all along the Indian coastline.*

THE DECCAN PLATEAU

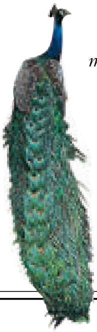
Separated from the Gangetic Plains by the scattered ranges of the Vindhyas, the Deccan Plateau is covered with black volcanic soil and ancient crystalline rocks. The plateau's mineral wealth includes gold and diamonds.

Tigers, *an endangered species and numbering only 3,500 in the country, are found across peninsular India.*

Daniel butterflies *are common in the region.*



Langurs *or Hanuman monkeys* (Semnopithecus entellus), *live in large groups, led by an adult male.*



Peacocks, *India's national bird, perform a spectacular dance when rain clouds appear.*

THE GHATS

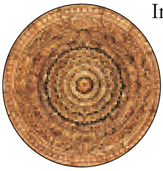
The hills of the Western and Eastern Ghats are covered with forests of teak, rosewood, *sal (Shorea robusta)* and sandalwood *(Santalam album),* prized for its fragrant wood. Many orchid species also grow here.

Nilgiri tahrs *live in the higher elevations of the Western Ghats* (see p649).

Bullfrogs *display their large vocal sacs during their mating season in the monsoon.*

Spectacled cobras *have characteristic spectacle-shaped markings on their hoods. Another reptile is the king cobra, the world's largest venomous snake.*

Sacred Architecture

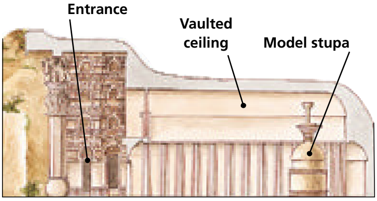

Ceiling panel from a Jain temple

India's 2,000-year-old architectural heritage is intrinsically linked to the country's major religions. Indigenous forms include Buddhist stupas and monasteries and Hindu and Jain temples *(see pp396–7)* in diverse styles. Many Indian temples, however, share common structural characteristics, being mostly built of stone columns and horizontal blocks, often richly carved with sacred imagery and decorative motifs. The true arch and the dome, as well as the use of mortar, were introduced in the 12th century by the Muslim conquerors.

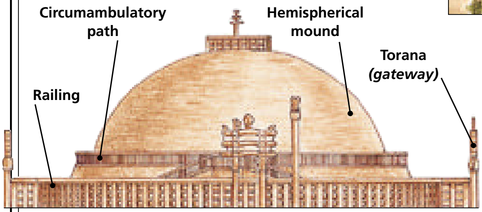
Sculpted column, Narayana Temple, Melkote

BUDDHIST ARCHITECTURE

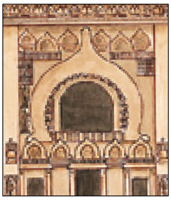
India's earliest religious monuments are stupas, hemispherical funerary mounds, and rock-cut shrines *(chaityas)* and monasteries *(viharas)*. While *chaityas* were places of worship, *viharas* were dwelling places for Buddhist monks and consisted of small residential cells arranged around four sides of an open court.


Entrance
Vaulted ceiling
Model stupa

Chaityas *served as halls* (grihas) *for congregational worship and enshrined a model stupa at one end.*

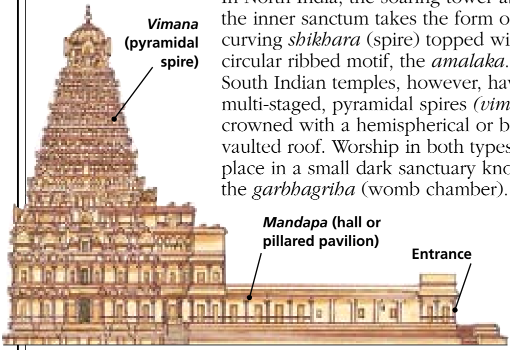

Circumambulatory path
Hemispherical mound
Torana (gateway)
Railing

Stupas *were monumental reliquaries in which the ashes of Buddhist teachers, including the Buddha, were interred. The Sanchi Stupa* (see pp244–5) *is faced in stone, and surrounded by a high railing with gateways* (toranas).

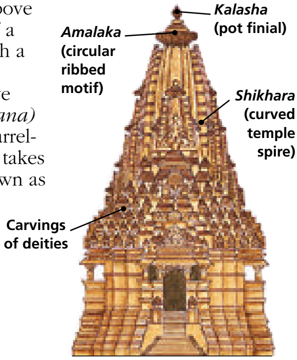

Rock-cut chaityas *have distinctive barrel-vaulted ceilings, expressed on the exterior as a horseshoe-shaped arch.*

HINDU TEMPLES

In North India, the soaring tower above the inner sanctum takes the form of a curving *shikhara* (spire) topped with a circular ribbed motif, the *amalaka*. South Indian temples, however, have multi-staged, pyramidal spires *(vimana)* crowned with a hemispherical or barrel-vaulted roof. Worship in both types takes place in a small dark sanctuary known as the *garbhagriha* (womb chamber).

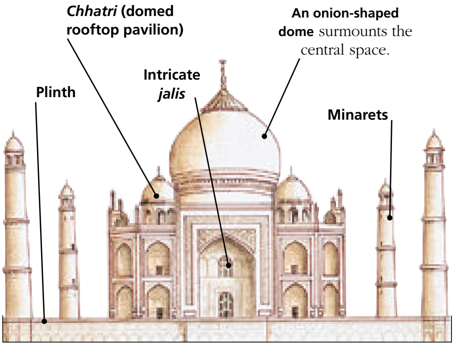

Vimana (pyramidal spire)
Mandapa (hall or pillared pavilion)
Entrance

South Indian temples, *such as Thanjavur's Brihadishvara Temple* (see pp598–9), *have corridors and spacious halls* (mandapas), *with a profusion of decorated columns. These lead to the* garbhagriha, *above which rises the multi-staged spire.*


Kalasha (pot finial)
Amalaka (circular ribbed motif)
Shikhara (curved temple spire)
Carvings of deities

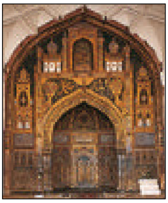
Khajuraho's *Kandariya Mahadev Temple's* shikhara (see pp236–7) *is considered the finest in North India.*

ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE


Chhatri (domed rooftop pavilion)
An onion-shaped dome surmounts the central space.
Intricate *jalis*
Plinth
Minarets

Taj Mahal *(see pp172–3)*, the zenith of Islamic architecture

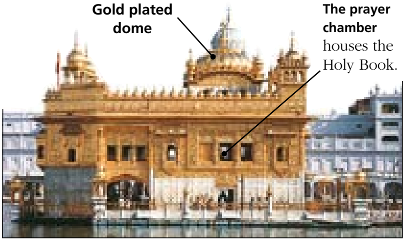
Mosques and tombs represent an imported tradition that was absorbed into Indian architecture. Mosques have domed prayer halls at one end of an open courtyard. The *mihrab* (arched niche) faces west, towards Mecca. The Mughals introduced the garden tomb, raised on a high plinth in the centre of a *charbagh*, an enclosed garden divided into four quarters. Decorative elements include Persian and Arabic calligraphy, geometric patterns and floral motifs, typical of Islamic art.



Mihrab, Bidar mosque *(see p545)*

GURDWARAS

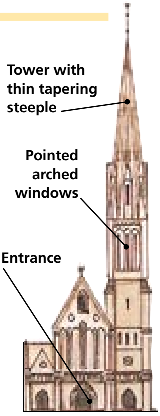
The Sikh gurdwara, a prayer chamber where the *Granth Sahib*, or Holy Book, is housed, is often roofed with a dome flanked by arcades. Based on the late-Mughal style prevailing in North India in the 18th century, gurdwaras blend Islamic and Hindu architectural styles.


Gold plated dome
The prayer chamber houses the Holy Book.

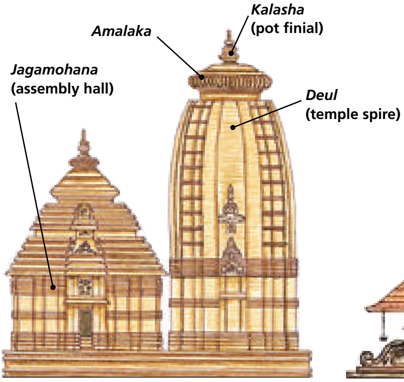
The Golden Temple in Amritsar *(see pp106–107)*

CHURCHES

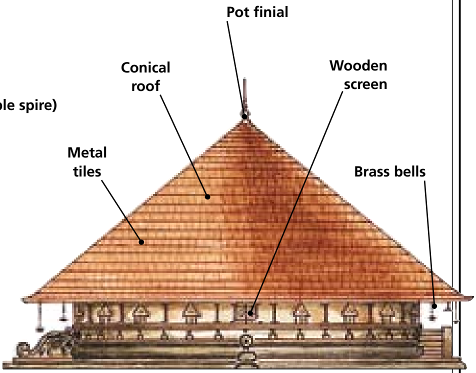
Though church architecture in Kerala predates the arrival of Europeans, most Christian places of worship, such as those in Goa *(see pp496–7)*, are built in European styles. A common design has a Neo-Classical portico topped with a tapering steeple. Many Indian churches are also built in a Neo-Gothic style, such as the Afghan Memorial Church of St John the Evangelist *(see p447)*.


Tower with thin tapering steeple
Pointed arched windows
Entrance

Afghan Memorial Church, Mumbai

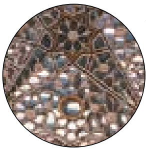

Kalasha (pot finial)
Amalaka
Jagamohana (assembly hall)
Deul (temple spire)

The Mukteshwar Temple (see p307) *typifies Orissa's temple architecture. The sanctuary has a curving spire* (deul) *and an adjoining assembly hall* (jagamohana).


Pot finial
Conical roof
Wooden screen
Metal tiles
Brass bells

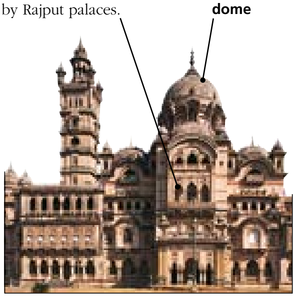
Kerala's temples, *such as the one at Ettumanur* (see p638), *have a distinctive form. The sanctums are often circular with roofs of sloping tiers of metal sheets or terracotta tiles. Carved woodwork and murals embellish the structure.*

Secular Architecture



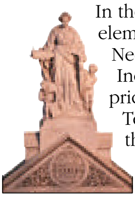
Detail from a mirrored room

Magnificent secular buildings, such as forts, palaces and mansions *(havelis)* were built by powerful ruling and aristocratic families. Many of these, especially in Rajasthan and Gujarat *(see pp346–7),* harmoniously combine monumental scale with superb decorative elements. The British imposed their own architectural stamp, a fusion of East and West. A variety of indigenous domestic forms that have remained unchanged through the ages can be seen throughout rural India.


Windows are inspired by Rajput palaces.
Mughal dome

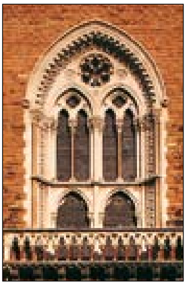
Laxmi Vilas in Vadodara *(see p419),* built in the late 19th century

CIVIC ARCHITECTURE

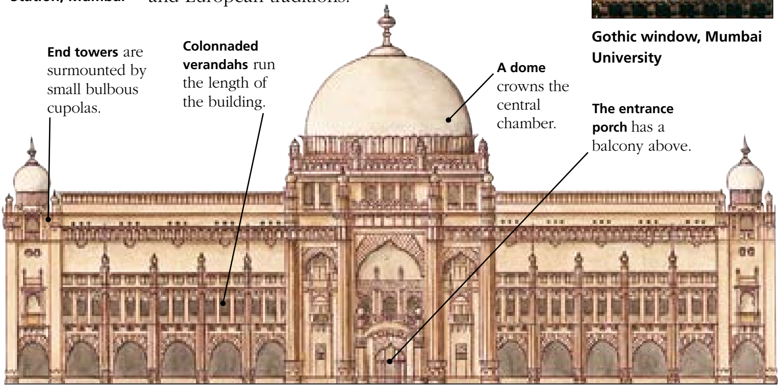


Sculpture, Churchgate Station, Mumbai

In the mid-19th century, the British began to incorporate elements from Indian Islamic architecture into European Neo-Classical or Gothic Revivalist styles. Known as Indo-Saracenic, this style reflected imperial and civic pride. Indo-Saracenic public buildings include Victoria Terminus *(see pp454–5)* and Mumbai University, and the High Court and Egmore station in Chennai. This culminated in the building of the new capital at New Delhi *(see pp72–3),* where Sir Edwin Lutyens and his associates evolved a grand architectural style which was a more elegant synthesis of Indian and European traditions.



Gothic window, Mumbai University


End towers are surmounted by small bulbous cupolas.
Colonnaded verandahs run the length of the building.
A dome crowns the central chamber.
The entrance porch has a balcony above.

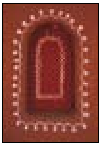
Prince of Wales Museum, Mumbai *(see pp450–51),* inspired by Bijapur's Gol Gumbad *(see p543)*

THE COURTYARD

Domestic architecture in India is governed by public and private spaces. The front portion of the house was open to visitors and guests, but just beyond that was the courtyard, the heart of the house, restricted to the family. Larger mansions, such as those at Shekhawati *(see p372)*, Jaisalmer *(see p387)* and Chettinad *(see p612)*, had several courtyards surrounded by elaborate colonnades. The separation of private and public spaces within the home grew out of social conventions that secluded women from the public gaze.

Courtyard with wooden pillars and carved doors

VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE

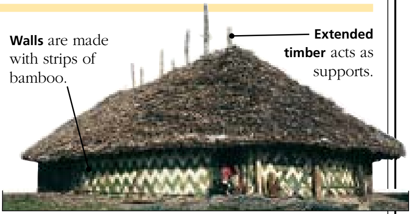


A painted niche

Rural houses in India reflect the country's varied climate and the range of available materials. In spite of the diversity, certain overall principles prevail. A typical dwelling is approached from the street through a formal doorway, often sheltered by a verandah, flanked by raised seating. The first room is usually used for both living and sleeping, and is thus larger. Cooking and eating take place to the rear, on the other side of an inner courtyard, near the well, or water supply. Hindu homes have a small masonry stand *(vrindavan)*, in the courtyard, where the sacred *tulsi* (basil) plant is grown for daily worship.

Walls are made with strips of bamboo.

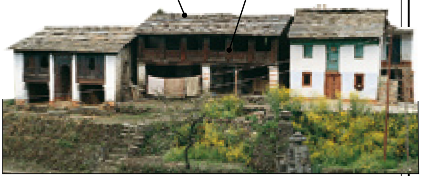
Extended timber acts as supports.



Tribal houses *in the forested northeast are quickly constructed from wood and bamboo. Rooms are added on as the family grows.*

Slate slabs are used to build strong, protective roofs.

Wooden pillars in the upper verandah.



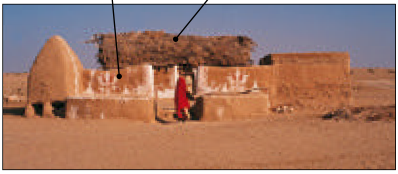
Mountain homes *are built on high ground, and are double-storeyed, with the ground floor serving as a stable for livestock in winter.*

Central Indian villages *are tightly packed with houses that are either one-roomed tiled structures or larger ones. Some have flat-roofs where the family sleep at night in summer.*

Coastal houses *have sloping tiled roofs as protection from sun and rain. The* tulsi *(basil) plant indicates that this is a Hindu home.*

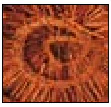
Mud walls are reinforced with straw and cowdung.

Thatch roofs, made of local elephant grass, are replaced every year.



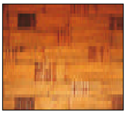
Desert dwellings *are built with mud and consist of a single thatched room, enclosed by a wall. The circular* kothi *is used to store grain. Designs in white lime embellish the outer walls.*

MATERIALS FOR CONSTRUCTION



Circular thatch ceiling

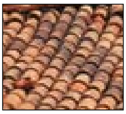
Traditionally, most houses were built of locally available material. Bamboo and thatch were employed in house construction in Bengal, Orissa and the northeast, while stone and terracotta tiles were preferred in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and South India. Sadly, such materials are now rapidly being replaced by steel and concrete. However, mud is still the most common material and is either applied directly or mixed with cowdung and straw.



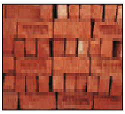
Woven bamboo panel for walls

Coconut palm leaf roof

Thatched roof made of grass



Half-cylinder tiles



Terracotta sun-dried bricks

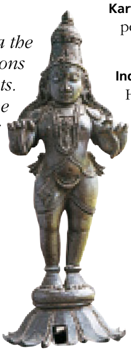
Stone slabs, ideal for walls

Hindu Mythology

Garuda, the great sun-eagle

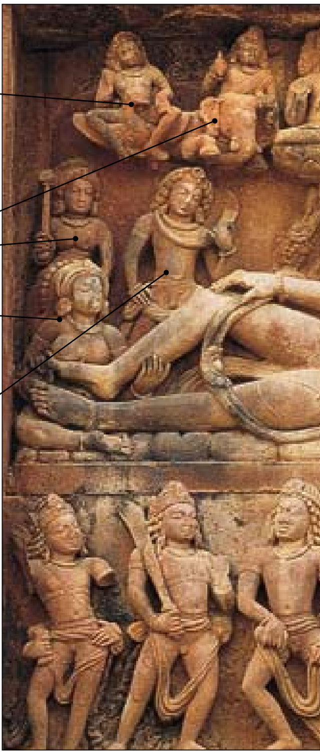
The vast pantheon of Hindu gods, goddesses and their divine exploits is best explored through sculpture. The principles of temple architecture were defined and established under the imperial Guptas (4th–6th centuries AD). Indian temples are adorned by a profusion of sculptures that are not merely decorative but also provide a visual interpretation of Hindu mythology. The numerous manifestations of deities, such as Shiva, Vishnu and Devi (the goddess also known as Parvati, Durga, Kali) are depicted in great detail. Semi-divine beings, such as devotees, nymphs and musicians complete the picture.

Dvarapala *is the armed guardian who stands outside the entrance of the temple or by the door of the inner sanctum. These forbidding figures carry weapons to protect the deity from intruders.*



Vedic gods, *such as Surya the Sun God, were manifestations of nature and the elements. They were absorbed into the Hindu pantheon of deities almost 2,000 years ago.*

Lakshmi, *the Goddess of Wealth, appears as Gajalakshmi in this panel from Mamallapuram* (see p579). *She is seen with two elephants* (gaja) *who bathe her with their upturned trunks.*



Karttikeya is mounted on his peacock vehicle *(vahana)*.

Indra, the Vedic God of the Heavens, sits on Airavata, the four-trunked white elephant representing the rain-cloud.

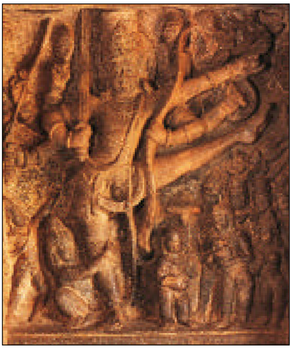
Female attendant

Lakshmi, the consort of Vishnu

Garuda, the vehicle *(vahana)* of Vishnu, is half man and half eagle.

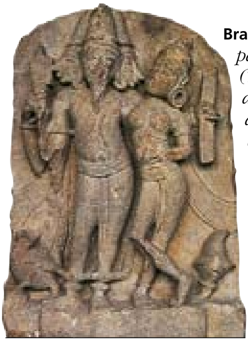
VISHNU ANANTASAYANA

This 5th-century panel from Deogarh *(see p233)* depicts Vishnu asleep on the serpent Ananta, whose hood shelters him. Brahma on a lotus rises from behind, while Shiva sits with Parvati on his *vahana*, the bull Nandi. Attendants and celestial beings surround the figure. The mace, discus, shield and sword, Vishnu's attributes, are personified below to ward off demons.

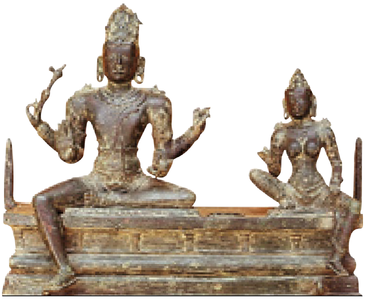


Vishnu's *dwarf incarnation, Vamana* (see p679) *transforms himself into a giant to measure out the universe in three steps. This panel from Badami* (see pp536–7) *shows him with one leg raised skywards.*

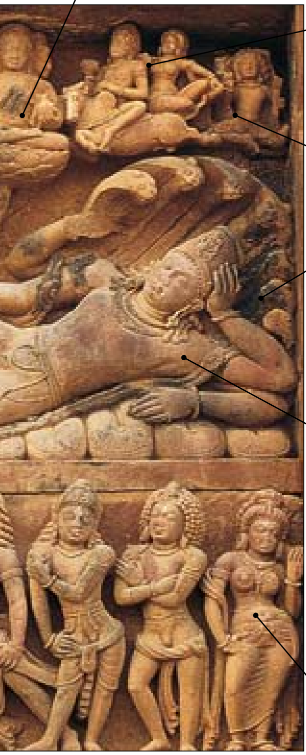
Mohini, *the female form of Vishnu, is described as an enchantress, the most alluring maiden imaginable. Courtesans and nymphs are also carved as bracket figures.*



Brahma, *the Creator, is part of the holy Trinity (Trimurti) of gods that also include Vishnu and Shiva. He is depicted with four heads, of which only three are usually visible, and holds a sceptre, a spoon, a string of beads and the Vedas. He is seen here with his consort, Saraswati, the Goddess of Learning.*



Shiva, *the God of Destruction, is seated with his wife, Parvati, who represents his peaceful and domestic aspect. Shiva holds an elephant goad and drum* (dumroo), *while Parvati has a lotus* (kamal) *in her hand.*



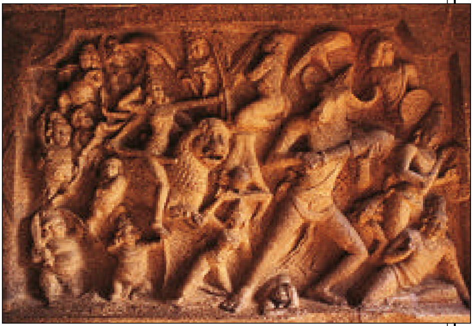
Shiva and Parvati

Flying celestial figure

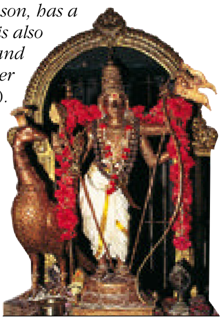
Ananta, the Many Headed Serpent, is also known as Adishesha.

Vishnu, the Preserver

Attendants, the personifications of Vishnu's four attributes, protect the god from demons.

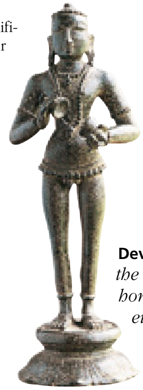


Durga, *the fierce form of gentle Parvati, slaying the buffalo-demon, Mahishasura. This panel from Mamallapuram, known as Mahishasuramardini, shows Durga riding a lion with a deadly weapon in each of her eight arms, given to her by the gods to annihilate the demon.*



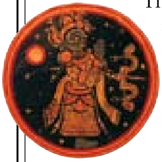
Karttikeya, *Shiva's warrior son, has a peacock as his* vahana. *He is also known as Skanda, Subramanya and Murugan in South India. The other son of Shiva is Ganesha* (see p467).

Dancers, musicians and other performers, usually carved on the lower plinths of temples

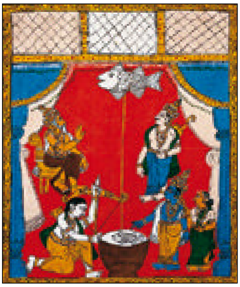


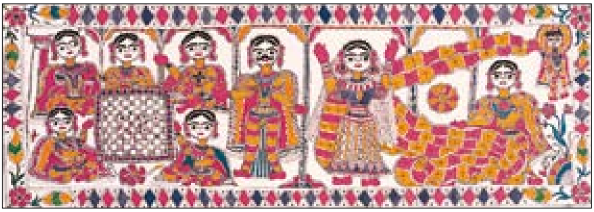
Devotees *are often elevated to the status of saints and are honoured for their devotion to either Shiva or Vishnu. This 11th-century bronze is of a Shaivite boy-saint holding cymbals in his hands.*

The Great Epics


Pandava hero on *ganjifa* card

The two great epic poems, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, have had an abiding impact on Indian culture and philosophy. Over the centuries, their stories have inspired a great deal of art, music, dance, theatre and, more recently, popular TV serials. Containing a fund of wisdom about human behaviour, emotions and moral dilemmas, the epics continue to guide the daily lives of millions of Indians. Though known in their oral form since at least 500 BC, they were only put into writing around the 4th century AD.

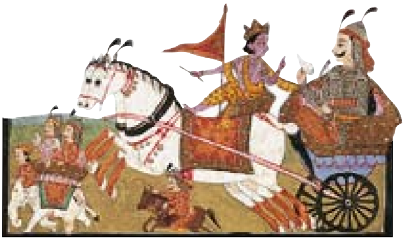

Arjuna *shot the eye of a fish reflected in water, and won the hand of Draupadi, who then married all five brothers.*

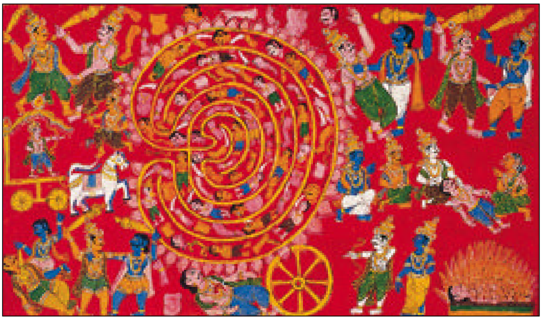

In a game of dice *with the Kauravas, the Pandavas lost their kingdom and Draupadi. She was saved from the shame of being disrobed by the Kauravas when her sari kept growing magically to cover her.*

THE MAHABHARATA

This epic recounts the rivalry between the five heroic Pandava brothers – Yudishthira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakul and Sahdeva – and 100 members of the Kaurava clan, headed by Duryodhana, and culminates in a great battle. Several other fables, legends and discourses are woven into the main story, making the *Mahabharata* eight times longer than the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* put together.

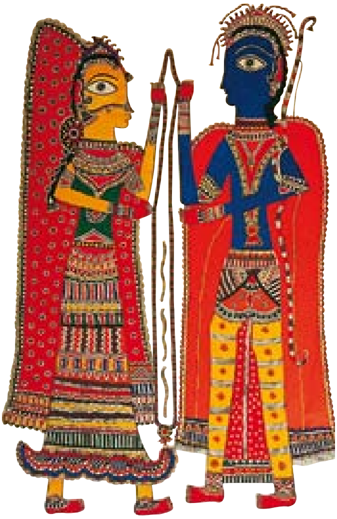
Forced into exile *after the game of dice, the Pandavas wandered all over India for 13 years. In the final year, Arjuna lived in disguise as a eunuch, giving dance lessons.*


The Bhagavad Gita *is a sermon given to Arjuna by Lord Krishna, who acted as Arjuna's charioteer, on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. It is a famous discourse on ethics and morality, that contains the essence of Hindu religion and philosophy.*

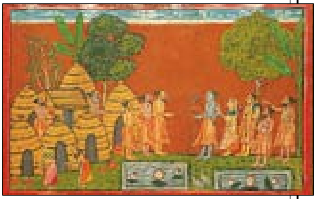

In the final battle *the Kauravas created a cobweb-shaped defensive formation called the* chakravyuha, *inside which Arjuna's son was trapped and killed. However, on the 18th day of this fierce battle, the Pandavas, with Krishna's divine guidance, finally emerged victorious, and regained their kingdom, which they ruled with Draupadi as their queen.*

THE RAMAYANA

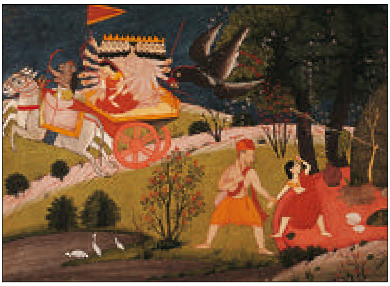
Rama, the ideal hero, was prevented from becoming king of Ayodhya by the intrigues of his stepmother, and sent into exile with his wife Sita and brother Lakshman. The demon-king, Ravana, abducted Sita, who was then rescued by the two brothers with the help of the monkey god, Hanuman. Rama is worshipped as an incarnation of Vishnu *(see p679).*



The wedding of Rama and Sita *took place after Rama succeeded in breaking the great bow of Shiva, which other suitors for her hand could not even manage to lift off the ground.*

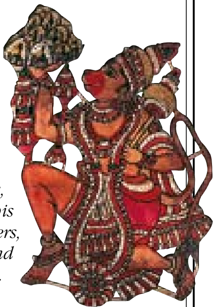


Exiled to the forest *for 14 years, Rama, Sita and Lakshman lived simply and visited the hermitages of many holy sages.*

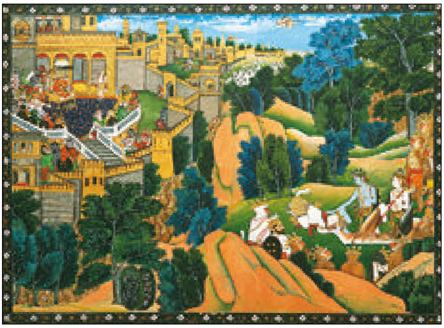


Sita was abducted *from her forest hut by Ravana, the demon-king of Lanka, who came disguised as a mendicant. The brave vulture Jatayu tried to save her, but his wings were slashed by Ravana. However, Jatayu was able to tell Rama what had happened before he died.*

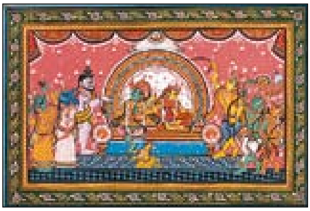
Ravana's ten heads *and 20 arms signify his great intellectual and physical strength.*



Hanuman, the Monkey God, *is a much-loved figure in the pantheon of Hindu gods, worshipped for his miraculous powers, his courage and physical prowess.*

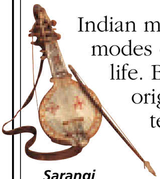


Ravana's palace at Lanka *was attacked by Rama and Lakshman who, with the help of Hanuman and his army of monkeys, rescued Sita and killed Ravana. Lakshman was gravely wounded in the battle, but saved by the magical mountain herb, Sanjivini, brought by Hanuman.*



Rama's triumphant return *to Ayodhya is celebrated in the festival of lights, Diwali* (see p37), *which symbolizes the victory of good over evil.*

Classical Music and Dance

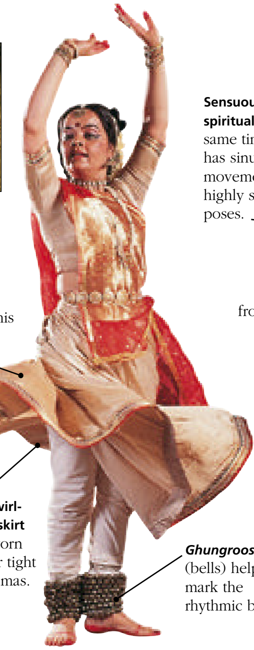


***Sarangi* and bow**

Indian music and dance are simultaneously modes of worship and a joyous celebration of life. Based on ancient codified texts, they originated as a form of worship in the temples, and gradually acquired a more secular character with royal patronage. Different regions of India have their own classical dance forms, while classical music is distinguished by two main styles – Hindustani and Carnatic *(see p595)*, the latter specific to South India.

Kuchipudi *is a highly dramatic dance form from Andhra Pradesh, which often enacts scenes from the great epics.*

Frieze of a dancer from an 11th-century South Indian temple



Complex footwork and rhythms, and multiple pirouettes characterize this dance form.

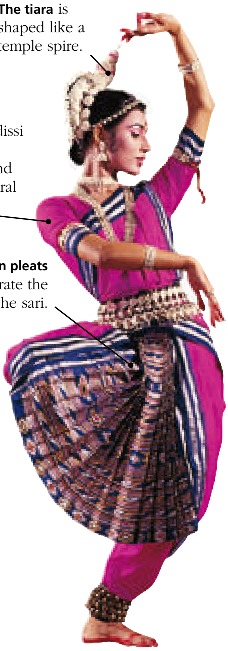
A swirling skirt is worn over tight pyjamas.

Ghungroos (bells) help mark the rhythmic beat.

Kathak *was a favourite dance at the royal courts of northern India.*

CLASSICAL DANCE

A wide range of hand gestures, facial expressions and body postures, codified in the *Natya Shastra*, a 4th-century treatise, constitute the "language" of Indian classical dance forms. Their themes are mostly based on religious mythology, and percussion and music play an important role.



The tiara is shaped like a temple spire.

Sensuous and spiritual at the same time, Odissi has sinuous movements and highly sculptural poses.

Fan pleats decorate the front of the sari.

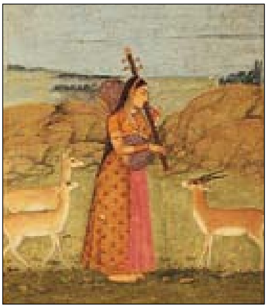
Odissi *developed in the temples of Orissa as an offering to the deities.*

HINDUSTANI MUSIC

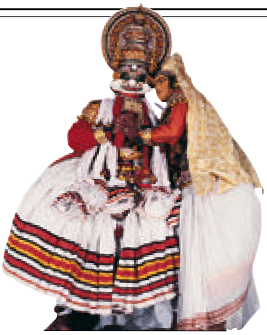
The origins of Hindustani classical music date to about 3000 BC. The raga (melodic line) and the *tala* (rhythmic cycle) are its foundation, and there is no formal written score. This gives artistes great latitude to improvise within the melodic framework of a raga. There are more than a 100 ragas, each assigned to a particular time of day or season, according to the mood or images its melody evokes. Royal patrons founded different *gharanas* or schools of music, which have preserved their individuality by passing knowledge down orally from guru (teacher) to *shishya* (disciple).

Ravi Shankar, *one of India's foremost sitar players, introduced Indian classical music to the West.*

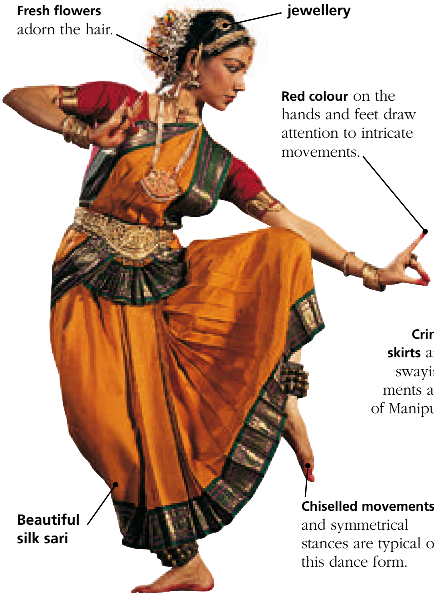
Amjad Ali Khan *plays the* sarod, *an instrument developed by his grandfather from the* rabab, *a medieval Central Asian lute.*



Nine rasas *(moods) are mentioned in the 4th-century treatise* Natya Shastra. *From the erotic, comic and pathetic to the odious, marvellous and quiescent, the* rasas *cover every mood and expression, whether in music, dance or painting. This 17th-century miniature painting depicts the serene mood of the morning* Raga Todi.



Kerala's Kathakali dance featuring spectacular masks *(see p657)*



Fresh flowers adorn the hair.

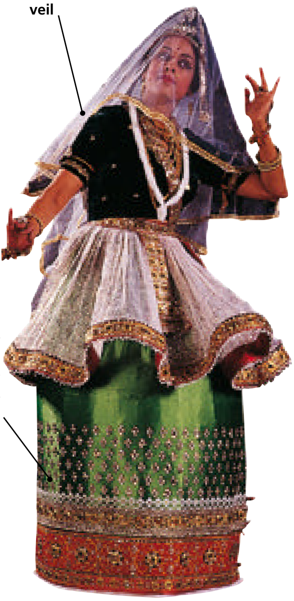
Elaborate jewellery

Red colour on the hands and feet draw attention to intricate movements.

Beautiful silk sari

Chiselled movements and symmetrical stances are typical of this dance form.

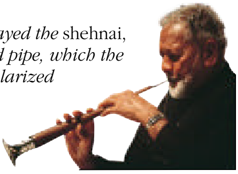
Bharat Natyam, *from Tamil Nadu, has eloquent eye and hand movements* (mudras).



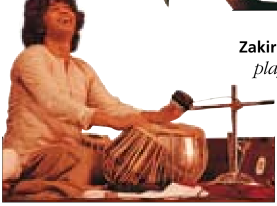
Diaphanous veil

Crinoline-like skirts and gentle swaying movements are typical of Manipuri dance.

Manipuri, *from the northeast, enacts the legend of Radha and Krishna* (see p179).



Bismillah Khan *played the* shehnai, *a ceremonial reed pipe, which the late maestro popularized into a concert instrument.*



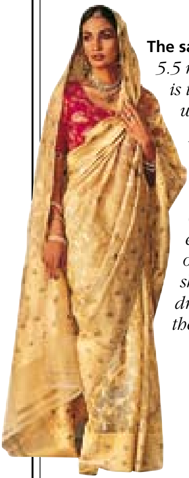
Zakir Hussain *plays the tabla, a pair of drums that provide percussion at most music and dance performances.*

Kishori Amonkar *is a leading singer. A concert usually begins with a slow evocation of the raga, followed by an elaboration of the melodic line, and culminating in a fast-paced climax.*

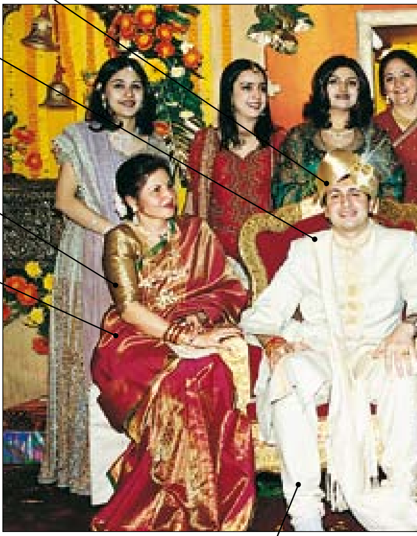
Costumes of India

One of the most remarkable features of Indian apparel is the ingenious way in which a simple length of unstitched cloth is used. Gracefully draped as a sari, or wrapped around the head as a turban, the length of fabric is versatile, and is worn by both men and women. Stitched garments include the *kurta*, pyjama, sherwani, the voluminous skirt *(ghaghara or lehenga)*, and of course, the trouser, shirt and ubiquitous blue jeans. Today, despite the growing influence of contemporary Western fashion trends, most Indians continue to dress traditionally. The sari, particularly, is still worn all over India, even though the style of draping it differs from region to region.

The Veil (odhni *or* dupatta) *is an essential part of dress in conservative societies.*



The sari, *usually 5.5 m (6 yd) long, is tied around the waist, with the pleats tucked into an under-skirt. The* pallav *(end-piece) is either drawn over the left shoulder or draped over the head.*



***Safa* (turban)**

Angavastram is the unstitched mantle draped over the shoulder.

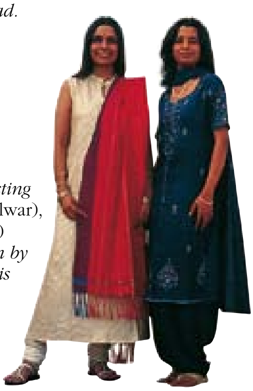
Sari blouse

Sari

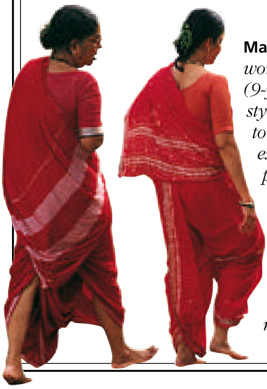
Bracelet-like folds of the *churidar.*

THE INDIAN WEDDING

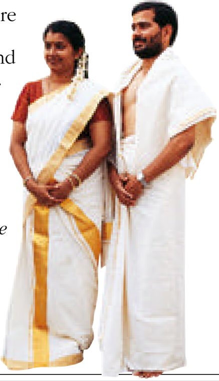
Festivals and weddings are glittering events that showcase the range and variety of clothes worn by both men and women in India. Such occasions are what keep traditional customs and attire alive today.



Salwar-kameez, *consisting of a baggy pyjama* (salwar), *a loose tunic* (kameez) *and* dupatta, *are worn by women in Punjab. This outfit is now worn all over India.*



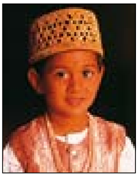
Maharashtrian *women wear 8-m (9-yd) saris in a style very similar to a dhoti. The extra fabric is pleated in front, drawn between the legs and tucked in at the back, to allow freedom of movement.*



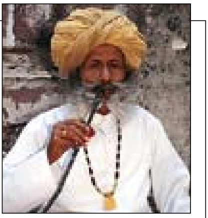
In Kerala, *women wear a two-piece sari* (mundu-veshti), *of which the* mundu *forms the lower garment, while the* veshti *is tucked into the waist to form the* pallav. *Men just wear the lower garment, with an* angavastram.

HEADDRESSES

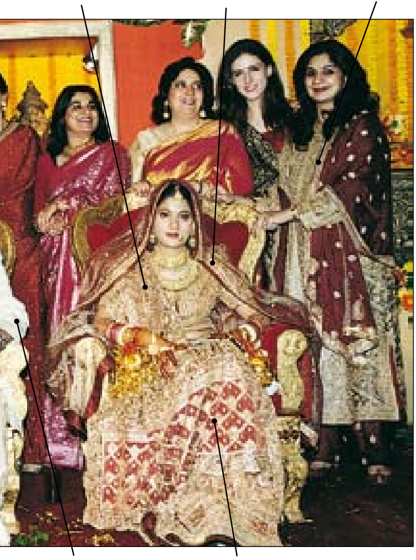
For Indian men, the most important accessory is the turban, *(pagri* or *safa)*, an unstitched length of cloth that is deftly tied around the head. More than just a fashion statement, the turban's style and colour also indicates the wearer's social, religious, caste and regional status. Rajasthani turbans are intrinsic to the cultural ethos of the land, whereas in Punjab, the Sikh turban is characteristic of their identity as a martial community *(see p103)*. From the mid-19th century onwards, *topis* (caps) became popular, especially among courtiers in the Muslim courts. Even today, men wear plain or ornamental caps in mosques or during festivals.



***Topi*, worn by a young Muslim boy**



A turbaned patriarch from Jodhpur, Rajasthan



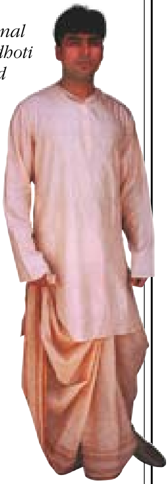
***Choli* (tight-fitting blouse)**

***Odhni* (veil)**

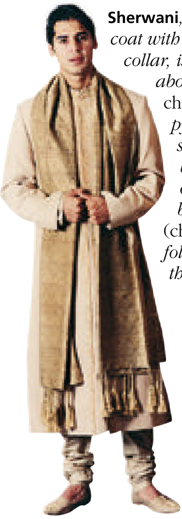
Kurta

The bridegroom wears a formal sherwani-*churidar* in ivory silk.

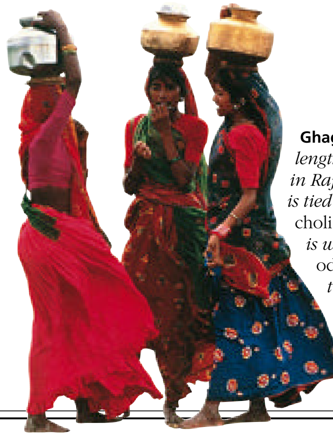
The bride's *lehenga* is red silk, heavily encrusted with gold embroidery.



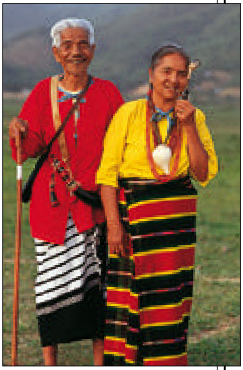
The dhoti-*kurta* *is the traditional male attire and comprises a dhoti (loincloth) or* lungi, *either tied around the waist or tucked between the legs. The upper garment is the stitched, long-sleeved* kurta.



Sherwani, *a long coat with a high collar, is worn above the* churidar *pyjama, so-called because of the bracelet-* (churi-) *like folds near the ankles.*



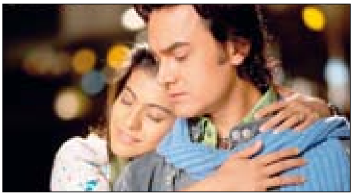
Ghaghara, *the ankle-length, gathered skirt worn in Rajasthan and Gujarat, is tied with a drawstring. A* choli *(tight-fitting blouse) is worn on top, while the* odhni *has one end tucked into the waist-band and the other taken over the right shoulder to cover the head.*



In Manipur, *women wear the sarong-like* phanek, *while men wear a garment known as the* khudei. *Each tribe, however, is identified by its distinctive colours and stripes. This couple is from the Paite tribe.*

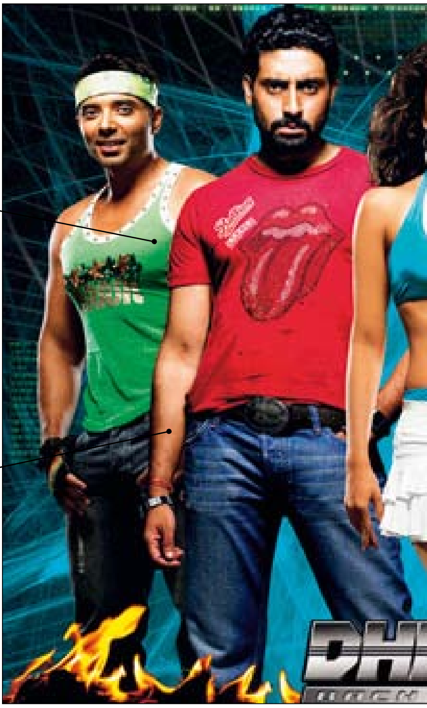
Bollywood's Magic Formula

Hindi films from Bollywood (Bombay or Mumbai) are a fascinating mix of romance, violence, comedy, and tragedy, interspersed with song and dance sequences, and with a clear social or moral message. Ever since its inception in 1899, fashions in Bollywood have swung from mythological epics to action thrillers to family dramas. But the basic *s la* (spicy mix) formula, which appeals to a large and diverse audience, remains unchanged.



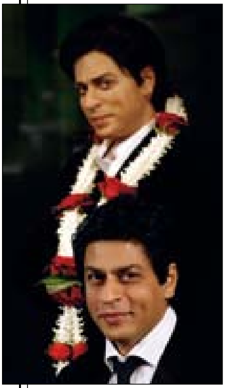
Romance *trickles down into almost every plot that a film explores. The hero wooing the heroine always forms a very popular sequence.*

Heroines *add an essential touch of glamour. Slim, fashionable and gorgeously dressed film stars, such as Miss World 1994, Aishwarya Rai, set the standard for feminine beauty and grace.*



Star-studded, high-budget films usually ensure a box-office hit.

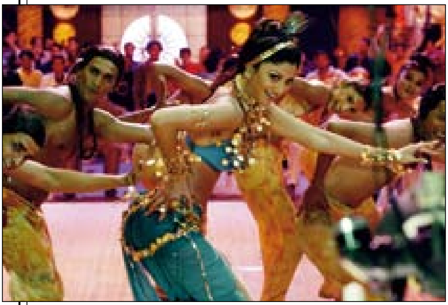
Abhishek Bachchan is among India's top young actors.



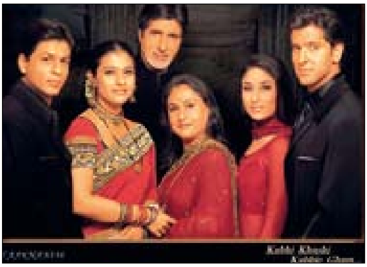
The hero cult *and Shah Rukh Khan are synonymous. Affectionately called King Khan, he is popular both in India and abroad, even boasting a wax statue at Madame Tussaud's in London. Aishwarya Rai and superstar Amitabh Bachchan share the honour with him.*

THE HINDI FILM INDUSTRY

It costs anywhere between US$1.75 million and $30 million to produce a Bollywood film. The budget is spent on massive fees for the stars, exotic locations, special effects, and on huge promotional campaigns. Of the more than 100 films produced every year, some are dubbed into regional Indian languages, or subtitled in English for international audiences.



Song and dance *sequences range from duets between the hero and heroine to spectacular set pieces with lots of male and female dancers. These are released before the film as music videos for TV, and often become hits, even if the film flops at the box office.*



Family values *form the core of most films. The home can be the scene of great happiness or discord, and in the end everyone comes together.*

Villains *are portrayed as evil incarnate. In* Omkara *(2006), which was based on Shakespeare's* Othello*, the villain is a loyalist turned traitor who seeks to avenge himself at the cost of many innocent lives.*

Violence *can often be of the comic book variety. Dramatic fights are staged between the hero and villain at the climax, and invariably end with the triumph of good over evil.*

Fashion statements made by Bollywood stars inspire youngsters to follow suit.

The hero usually anchors the film, with the plot and other characters revolving around him. Hrithik Roshan is one of Bollywood's most sought-after stars, with electric good looks and a powerful physique that have earned him a huge fan following.

Aishwarya Rai as the heroine represents the fun-loving, urban, Westernized youth.

NEW WAVE CINEMA

In the 1950s and 60s parallel or "art" cinema was dominated by Satyajit Ray *(see p260)*, whose thought-provoking films portrayed everyday life in Indian villages and small towns. By focusing on realism and social issues rather than fantasy and entertainment, he paved the way for internationally acclaimed directors such as Deepa Mehta and Mira Nair to make films that made an impact on society.

Deepa Mehta with the star cast of her Oscar-nominated film *Water*

Rang De Basanti

Youth, *the prime focus of Bollywood films, saw a paradigm shift with* Rang De Basanti *(2006), a commercial film that didn't just set fashion trends but made a case for a better society with the participation of the younger generation.*

INDIA THROUGH THE YEAR

Orchids in full bloom

Indians love celebrations and the year is filled with innumerable fairs and festivals. Almost every day marks a religious or social event celebrated by the diverse religious or local communities, where ritual fasting and feasting go hand in hand. Some festivals are linked to the pantheon of gods and goddesses, others follow the changing seasons and mark pastoral occasions. Some commemorate anniversaries and events of national importance such as the Republic Day *(see p75)*. Hindu festivals usually follow the lunar calendar and both the full moon *(purnima)* and the new moon *(pradosh)* are considered auspicious. Muslim festivals, too, are determined by the new moon. This means that the dates of most religious festivals vary from year to year. See also special festival columns in each chapter.

Holi celebrations in the area around Mathura

SPRING (FEB–MAR)

From Mid-February to the end of March, spring (Basant) is India's most glorious season with flowers in full bloom and pleasant, not-too-hot temperatures. It is also the main season for weddings, parades, cricket matches, horse racing, flower shows and other events.

Basant Panchami *(Feb)*. Considered to be the first day of spring, Basant is celebrated all over North India. People dress in shades of yellow, echoing the yellow mustard blossoms that are in bloom. In Eastern India, the same day is celebrated as Saraswati *puja*, honouring the Goddess of Learning and Wisdom.

Vasantahabba *(Feb)*, Nrityagram. One of Bangalore's most awaited dance festivals. Acclaimed artistes from all over India perform from dusk till dawn.

Elephanta Festival *(Feb)*, Elephanta Island. An open air festival of classical dance and music, with performances by renowned artistes.

Kala Ghoda Festival *(Feb)*, Mumbai. A two-week extravaganza of the visual and performing arts is held in Mumbai's main cultural district of Kala Ghoda. The National Gallery of Modern Art and the Jehangir Art Gallery, as well as the area's sidewalks, become venues for sitar and tabla performances, dance recitals and exhibitions of paintings, prints, photographs and installation art.

Nishagandhi Dance Festival *(Feb)*, Thiruvananthapuram. Artistes of almost all classical dance forms perform at the open air Nishagandhi Auditorium.

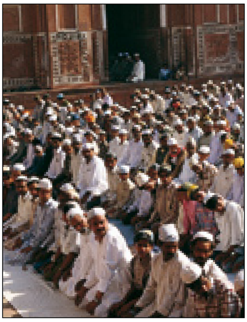
Shivratri *(Feb/Mar)*. Devotees of Shiva observe the night of his celestial wedding to Parvati.

Delhi Dhrupad Samaroh *(Mar)*, Delhi. Leading exponents of Dhrupad, a classical musical tradition, present a series of recitals.

Holi *(Mar)*. One of the most important Hindu festivals, Holi takes place on a full moon night and marks the end of winter. On the eve of Holi, bonfires are lit, and an effigy of the demon Holika is burnt to signify the triumph of good over evil. The next day, people swarm the streets, sprinkling coloured water and powder (gulal) on each other. This exuberant festival is especially dear to Lord Krishna, and around Mathura, his birthplace (see p178), it is celebrated with great abandon.

Nauchandi Mela *(Mar)*, Meerut. Held around the shrine of a Muslim saint and a temple, this fair has come

Show jumping at the Delhi Horse Show



***Namaaz* (prayers) being offered during Id-ul-Zuha**

to symbolize Hindu-Muslim unity. Its origins date to the late 17th century when local leaders decided to merge festivities held concurrently at both shrines. Today, this is more a fun-filled carnival than a religious event.

Jamshed-e-Navroz *(Mar).* Celebrated by the Parsi community as their New Year's Day, the festival is named after the Persian king Jamshed, who is believed to have first introduced the solar calendar. Devotees visit fire-temples and make offerings of sandalwood.

Ramnavami *(Mar).* Nine days of fasting *(navaratris)*, precede the birth of the hero-god Rama *(see p27)* on Ramnavami (the ninth day). During this period, many Hindu households maintain a strict vegetarian diet, and prepare special food cooked in ghee (clarified butter) without garlic or onions.

International Film Festival of Kerala *(Mar/Apr)*, Kerala. This event invites films from around the world, in categories such as world cinema, short films, documentary and Malayalam cinema.

Shankarlal Sangeet Sammelan *(Mar/Apr)*, Delhi. This is the capital's oldest classical vocal and instrumental music festival.

Delhi Horse Show *(Mar/Apr)*, Delhi. A two-day sporting event, where thoroughbred horses from all over the country take part in show-jumping, tent-pegging and dressage events.

Four Square White-Water Rafting Challenge *(Mar/Apr)*, Rishikesh. The premier white-water rafting event in India, this is also one of the richest competitions in the world with a cash prize of US$25,000.

Mahavira Jayanti *(Mar/Apr).* Jains celebrate the birth of the founder of Jainism, Mahavira *(see p396).* This is celebrated on a large scale in Rajasthan and Gujarat. Devotees offer prayers to the 24 *tirthankaras.*

Milad-ul-Nabi *(Mar/Apr).* Prophet Mohammed's birthday is observed with prayers and readings from the holy Koran.

NATIONAL HOLIDAYS

Republic Day (26 Jan)
Independence Day (15 Aug)
Gandhi Jayanti (2 Oct)

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Id-ul-Zuha (Dec)
Shivratri (Feb/Mar)
Holi (Mar)
Good Friday (Mar/Apr)
Baisakhi (13 April)
Ramnavami (Mar)
Mahavira Jayanti (Mar/Apr)
Milad-ul-Nabi (Mar/Apr)
Buddha Jayanti (May)
Janmashtami (Aug/Sep)
Dussehra (Sep/Oct)
Diwali (Oct/Nov)
Guru Parab (Nov)
Christmas (25 Dec)

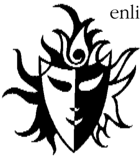
SUMMER (APR–JUN)

From early April until June, the northern plains, and much of the south, undergo a hot and dry summer. By May and June, the heat in the north builds up to a scorching 40° C (104° F) and above – a signal for those who can afford it to move up to the hill stations in the Himalayas. Meanwhile, temperatures in the Deccan Plateau and the south rise to about 38° C (100° F). Most festivities come to a halt.

Baisakhi *(13 Apr).* This festival heralds the harvest season in the north.

Himachal Hang Gliding Rally *(May)*, Kangra. An international competition that draws professionals from around the world.

Buddha Jayanti *(May).* The Buddha was born, attained enlightenment and died on the full moon of the fourth lunar month. Buddhists gather in *viharas* for prayers.



Symbol of National School of Drama

International Flower Festival *(May)*, Gangtok. A rare show of exotic flowering plants found in Sikkim, including almost 500 varieties of orchids.

NSD Repertory Festival *(May/Jun),* Delhi. This all-India festival is organized by the National School of Drama.

Procession of Buddhist lamas on Buddha Jayanti

Women teams participating in the Nehru Trophy Boat Race, Kerala

MONSOON (JUL–SEP)

July, August and September make up the monsoon season, celebrated in India for the magical transformation of the earth. The south, especially the coastal areas, and the northeast, experience very heavy rains. Rainfall is fairly scanty in the northern plains, which remain hot and humid.

International Mango Festival *(Jul)*, Delhi. Held at the peak of the mango season, over 1,000 varieties of mangoes grown in North India are exhibited and sold at the Talkatora Stadium.

Kanwar Mela *(Jul/Aug)*, Haridwar. The largest religious congregation after the Kumbh *Mela (see p211)*, Thousands of Kanwarias (Shiva devotees), converge for a dip in the Ganges. During this period, devotees are seen travelling by cycle and on foot, carrying gaily decorated *kanwars* (vessels hung on bamboo poles).

Independence Day *(15 Aug)*. This is a national holiday, commemorating India's freedom from British rule in 1947. The Prime Minister addresses the nation from the ramparts of the historic Red Fort in Delhi.

Raksha Bandhan *(Aug)*. Young girls tie sacred threads *(rakhis)* on their brothers' wrists as a token of love, and receive in exchange gifts and a promise of everlasting protection.

Bangalore Flower Show *(Aug)*, Bangalore. A spectacular flower show is held in the Glass House of the Lalbagh Gardens.

Nehru Trophy Boat Race *(Aug)*, Kerala. About 40 lavishly decorated snake boats *(see p633)* take part in a thrilling race at Alappuzha.

Janmashtami *(Aug/Sep)*. The birth of Lord Krishna is celebrated with abandon. Festivities reach their peak at midnight, while the day is given to fasting. The merrymaking in Mathura *(see p178)* and Brindavan *(see p179)* is especially grand.

A gaudy modern day *rakhi*

WINTER (OCT–FEB)

This is the most perfect season. The monsoon is over, and the days now begin to grow cooler. It is also the most auspicious period in the Indian calendar and ushers in a number of festivals. Winter also marks the sowing of crops such as mustard and wheat. The chill is at its worst in the northern plains and hills between mid-December and mid-January, and though temperatures often fall below 3° C (37° F), the days are sunny. The southern region does not experience very low winter temperatures, the minimum being around 19° C (66° F).

Dussehra *(Sep/Oct)*. For nine days, episodes from the *Ramayana (see p27)* depicting Rama's adventures against Ravana are enacted. The tenth day, Vijaya Dashami, celebrates Rama's defeat of Ravana, and huge effigies of the demon-king, his brother and son are burnt. In Delhi, the Shriram Bharatiya Kala Kendra's month-long dance-drama encapsulates the epic. Bengalis celebrate Durga Puja *(see p281)* at this time.

Gandhi Jayanti *(2 Oct)*. Mahatma Gandhi's birthday is widely celebrated as a national holiday.

Id-ul-Fitr *(Oct)*. This festival marks the end of Ramzan or Ramadan, the 40-day long period of fasting for Muslims, that marks the period when the Prophet received the message of the Koran from Allah. The actual day varies

Huge effigies of Ravana and his son during Dussehra, Delhi according to the sightings of the new moon. A special *namaaz* is held at Delhi's Jami Masjid. It is also called Mithi (sweet) Id, as *sewian,* a delicacy made with sweetened vermicelli, is prepared on the occasion.

Diwali *(Oct/Nov)*. Oil lamps illuminate each home to commemorate Rama's return to Ayodhya after 14 years of exile. Firecrackers are lit and sweets exchanged. Every locality holds Diwali *melas*.

Pushkar Fair *(Oct/Nov)*, Pushkar. Asia's largest camel, horse and cattle fair takes place in this pilgrim town.

Guru Parab *(Nov)*. On the first full moon night after Diwali, Sikhs celebrate the birthday of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism.

Prithvi International Theatre Festival *(Nov)*, Mumbai. Prithvi Theatre is one of Mumbai's best known theatres. This week-long festival brings international theatre groups to the city, who perform a variety of contemporary plays, along with a handful of Indian theatre groups.

Decorative paper kite

International Trade Fair *(14–21 Nov)*, Delhi. In this major event for Indian industry, goods manufactured in India and abroad are exhibited at Pragati Maidan. Cultural events are also held in the fair grounds.

International Film Festival of India *(Nov/Dec)*, Goa. India's premier film event, showcasing state-of-the-art films by Indian as well as international directors.

Madras Music Festival *(Dec)*, Chennai. The city celebrates its rich heritage of Carnatic music and dance with recitals by numerous well-known artistes.

Id-ul-Zuha *(Dec)*. The Muslim feast of sacrifice popularly known as Bakr Id, commemorates Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his own son, Ismail. Since then, a goat is sacrificed to Allah on this day, prayers are offered in mosques and special delicacies are served.

Immaculate vintage cars at the Kolkata rally

Mamallapuram Dance Festival *(Jan/Feb)*, Mamallapuram. Leading Indian classical dancers, perform Bharat Natyam, Kuchipudi, Kathakali and Odissi against a backdrop of the famous Pallava rock-cut sculptures.

Lohri *(13 Jan)*, Punjab. Bonfires and merriment mark what is believed to be the coldest day in winter.

Makar Sankranti *(14 Jan)*, Jaipur. Kites are flown to celebrate the return of the sun from the Equator to the Tropic of Capricorn. This day coincides with the Tamil festival of Pongal *(see p589)*.

Republic Day *(26 Jan)*. A national holiday. Pomp and pageantry mark India's birth as an independent republic. In Delhi, a colourful military parade is held at Rajpath.

Beating of the Retreat *(29 Jan)*, Delhi. This beautiful ceremony recalls the end of the day's battle when armies retreated to their camps. A grand display of regimental bands perform against the spectacular backdrop of North and South Blocks. As the sun sets, a bugle sounds the retreat, fireworks are lit and the buildings are framed with fairylights.

Vintage and Classic Car Rally *(Jan)*, Kolkata. *The Statesman* group of newspapers organizes this event when vintage cars, or the "grand old ladies", are flagged off on a short race. Their owners often dress up in period costumes. A similar rally is held in Delhi, in March each year.

Thyagaraja Aradhana Festival *(Jan)*, Thiruvaiyaru. An eight-day music festival is held in honour of the saint composer Thyagaraja, attracting eminent musicians from all over the country.

Island Tourism Festival *(Jan/Feb)*, Port Blair. A ten-day festival of dance, theatre and music reflects the multi-cultural population of the Andaman Islands. There are also exhibitions of local crafts, flora and marine life.

Desert Festival *(Jan/Feb)*, Jaisalmer. A cultural festival, held on the sand dunes over three days, with camel races, camel polo, folk dances and music performances.

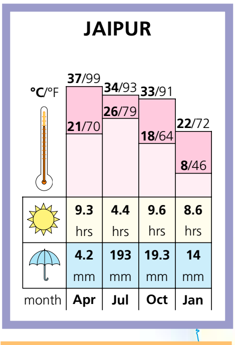
Bagpipers of an army regiment at the Beating of the Retreat ceremony

The Climate of India

Summer, monsoon and winter, with a brief but glorious spring and autumn, span the seasons in India. The climate changes with latitude and geographical location. In the north, temperatures soar in the vast Gangetic Plains, though the Himalayan belt remains pleasantly cool in summer. In winter, the high mountain passes remain snowbound. The central Deccan and deep south, however, have a tropical monsoon climate, with high temperatures and virtually no winter. India's coastal belts, on the other hand, remain humid and warm, with torrential rain. The semi-arid regions of Rajasthan and Kutch, as well as the rain shadow areas east of the Western Ghats, are among the country's worst drought hit areas, while the coasts and the northeast states, face the full onslaught of the monsoon, and are devastated by cyclones and floods each year.

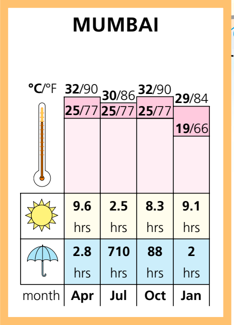
KEY

- ■ Tropical rainy region: consistently high temperatures and heavy summer rainfall.
- ■ Humid subtropical region: hot summer followed by heavy rainfall. Dry winter.
- ■ Tropical savannah region: long, dry season with high summer temperatures. Mild winter.
- ■ Tropical and subtropical steppe region: semi-arid. Low and erratic rainfall leading to drought.
- ■ Tropical desert region: high summer and very low winter temperatures. Scanty rainfall.
- ■ Mountain region: cold and dry climate. Short summer.
- ■ Mountain region: cold, humid winter. Short summer.



JAIPUR

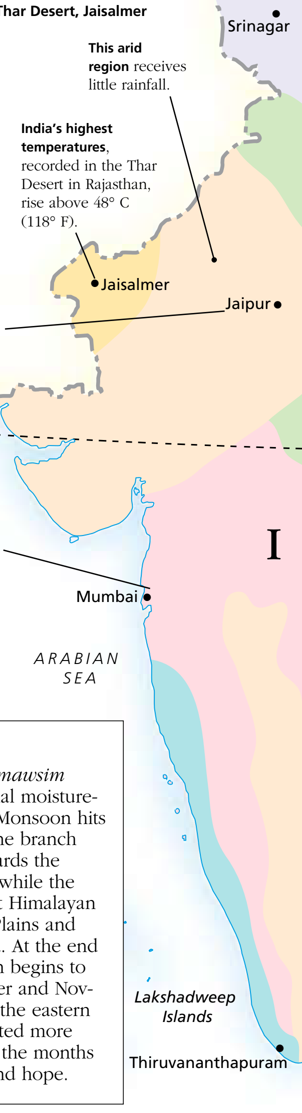
°C/°F	37/99 21/70	34/93 26/79	33/91 18/64	22/72 8/46
☀	9.3 hrs	4.4 hrs	9.6 hrs	8.6 hrs
☂	4.2 mm	193 mm	19.3 mm	14 mm
month	Apr	Jul	Oct	Jan



MUMBAI

°C/°F	32/90 25/77	30/86 25/77	32/90 25/77	29/84 19/66
☀	9.6 hrs	2.5 hrs	8.3 hrs	9.1 hrs
☂	2.8 hrs	710 hrs	88 hrs	2 hrs
month	Apr	Jul	Oct	Jan

Giant cacti growing in the arid Thar Desert, Jaisalmer



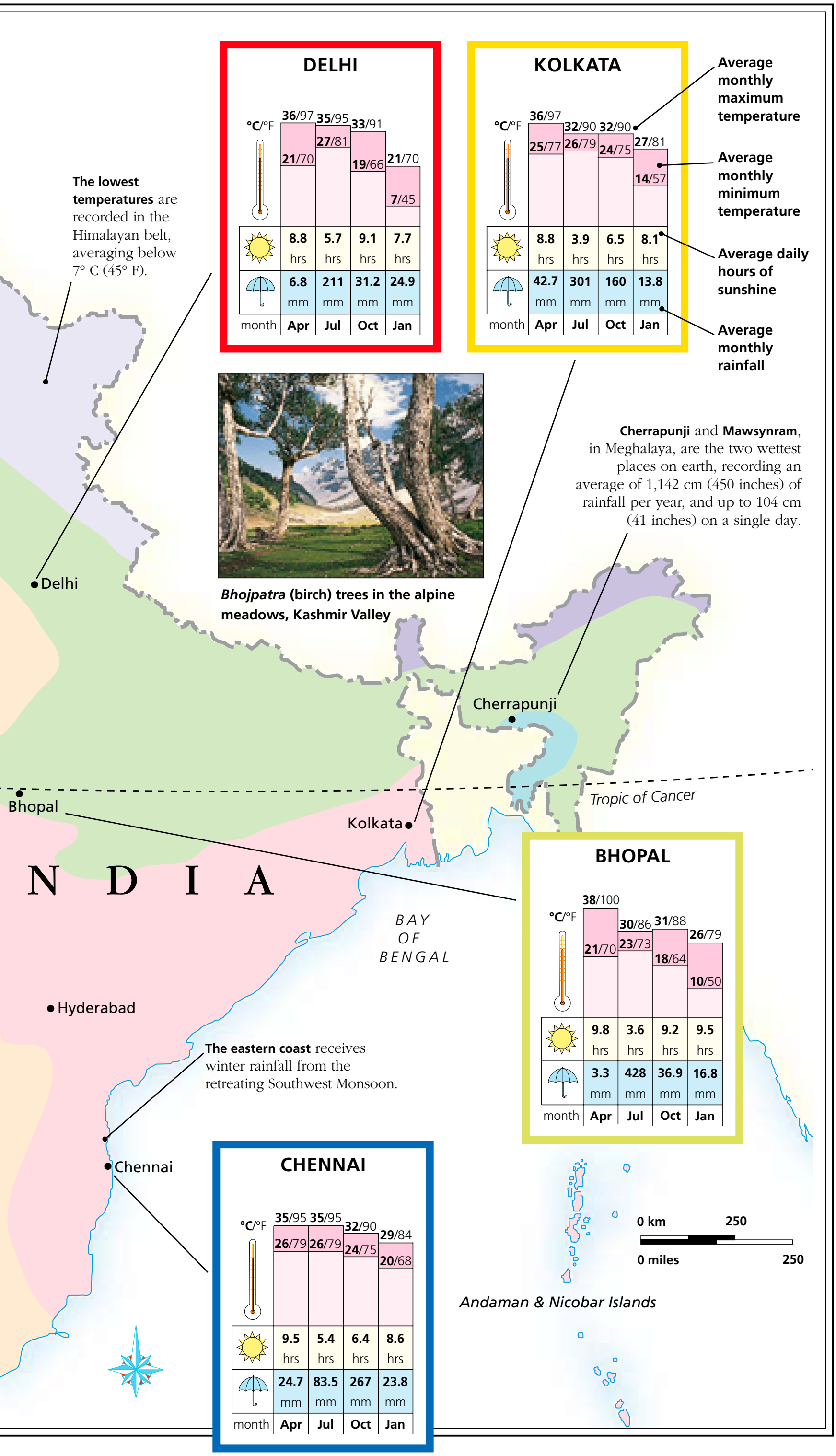
This arid region receives little rainfall.

India's highest temperatures, recorded in the Thar Desert in Rajasthan, rise above 48° C (118° F).

Torrential showers typify Kerala's monsoon

THE MONSOON

The word monsoon, from the Arabic *mawsim* (season), refers to South Asia's seasonal moisture-laden winds. In India, the Southwest Monsoon hits Kerala in end May. Simultaneously, one branch sweeps across the Bay of Bengal towards the Eastern Himalayas and the northeast, while the other, deflected westwards by the vast Himalayan barrier, moves towards the Gangetic Plains and gradually spreads across the mainland. At the end of September, the Southwest Monsoon begins to retreat southwards, and during October and November, southern Andhra Pradesh and the eastern coast of Tamil Nadu receive heavy rain. Nothing in India is awaited more eagerly than these annual rains; and songs and poems celebrate the months of Sawan and Bhadon (July and August), as a time of renewal and hope.



The lowest temperatures are recorded in the Himalayan belt, averaging below 7° C (45° F).

DELHI

month	Apr	Jul	Oct	Jan
°C/°F	36/97	35/95	33/91	21/70
	21/70	27/81	19/66	7/45
☀	8.8 hrs	5.7 hrs	9.1 hrs	7.7 hrs
☂	6.8 mm	211 mm	31.2 mm	24.9 mm

KOLKATA

month	Apr	Jul	Oct	Jan
°C/°F	36/97	32/90	32/90	27/81
	25/77	26/79	24/75	14/57
☀	8.8 hrs	3.9 hrs	6.5 hrs	8.1 hrs
☂	42.7 mm	301 mm	160 mm	13.8 mm

Average monthly maximum temperature

Average monthly minimum temperature

Average daily hours of sunshine

Average monthly rainfall

Bhojpatra **(birch) trees in the alpine meadows, Kashmir Valley**

Cherrapunji and **Mawsynram**, in Meghalaya, are the two wettest places on earth, recording an average of 1,142 cm (450 inches) of rainfall per year, and up to 104 cm (41 inches) on a single day.

BHOPAL

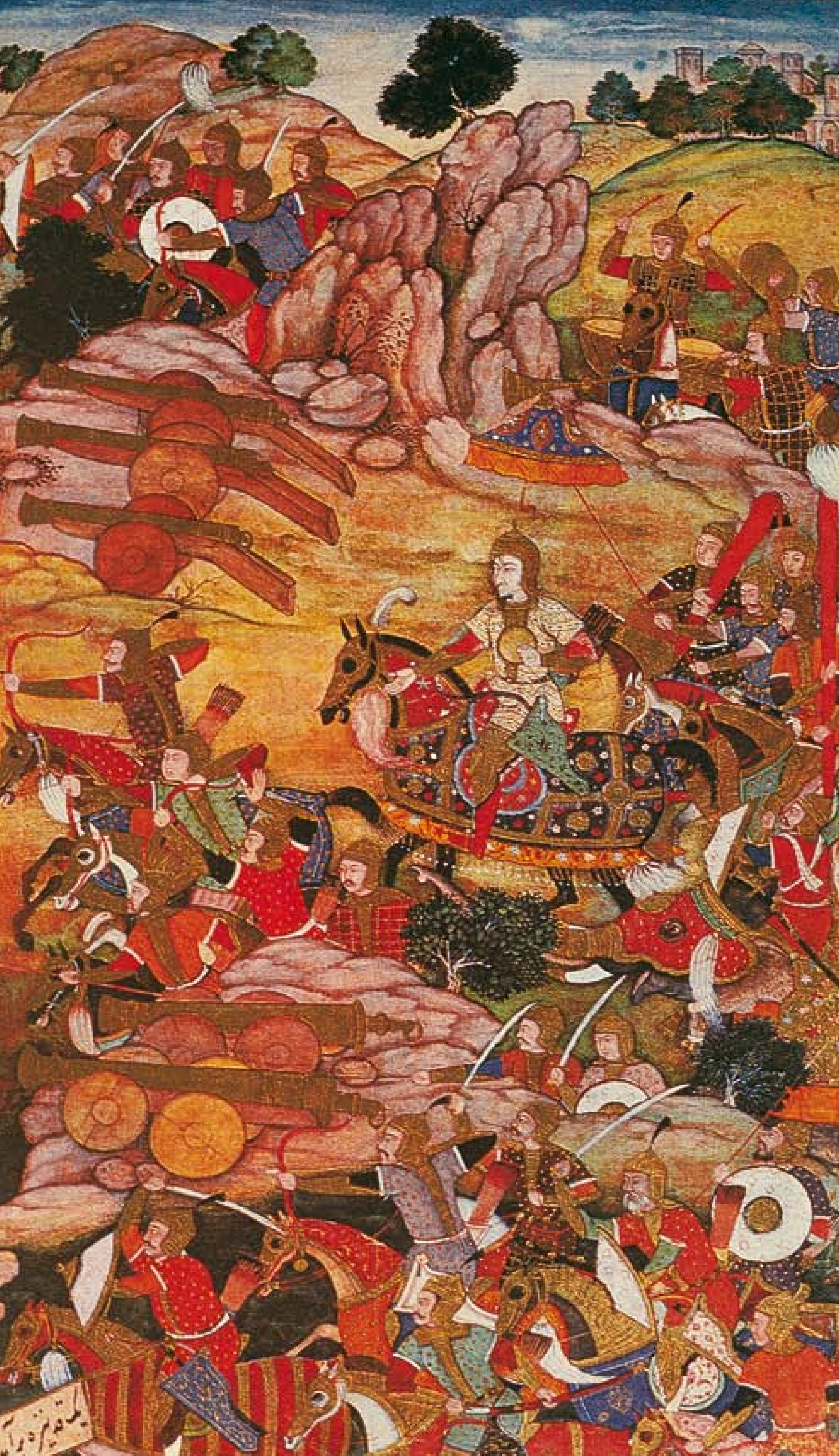
month	Apr	Jul	Oct	Jan
°C/°F	38/100	30/86	31/88	26/79
	21/70	23/73	18/64	10/50
☀	9.8 hrs	3.6 hrs	9.2 hrs	9.5 hrs
☂	3.3 mm	428 mm	36.9 mm	16.8 mm

The eastern coast receives winter rainfall from the retreating Southwest Monsoon.

CHENNAI

month	Apr	Jul	Oct	Jan
°C/°F	35/95	35/95	32/90	29/84
	26/79	26/79	24/75	20/68
☀	9.5 hrs	5.4 hrs	6.4 hrs	8.6 hrs
☂	24.7 mm	83.5 mm	267 mm	23.8 mm

Delhi
Cherrapunji
Tropic of Cancer
Bhopal
Kolkata
INDIA
BAY OF BENGAL
Hyderabad
Chennai
0 km
250
0 miles
250
Andaman & Nicobar Islands

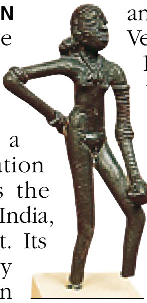


THE HISTORY OF INDIA

The name India comes from "Indoi"*, a Greek word for the people who lived beyond the Indus river. The roots of Indian civilization lie in the country's precise and awesome natural boundaries, formed by the Himalayas in the north, and seas to the east, south and west. These have fostered a remarkable physical and cultural unity, despite the size and diversity of the area they enclose.*

INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION

Prehistoric sites in India date back to at least 250,000 BC, with agricultural settlements appearing around 7000 BC. By 2500 BC, a sophisticated urban civilization emerged, stretching across the Indus Valley and northwest India, all the way down to Gujarat. Its main cities were marked by solid brick structures, roads in a grid pattern, and elaborate drainage systems. Stone seals with an as yet undeciphered script, and standardized weights and measures were among the artifacts found in this culture (also known as Harappan Civilization), which had a thriving trade with Mesopotamia. Remains of two of these cities can be seen at Lothal and Dholavira in Gujarat. By 1800 BC, these cities declined, perhaps because of tectonic or ecological changes.


Dancing girl, 2500 BC

THE VEDIC AGE

Around 1500 BC, a people commonly known as Aryans, who were probably migrants from Central Asia, settled in the Indus region. Described in the *Rig Veda*, a Sanskrit text of that period, they had a mixed pastoral and agrarian economy. Three later Vedas, written between 1000–600 BC, and associated Sanskrit texts, record the extension of their settlements across the Gangetic Valley. This was also the time of the *Mahabharata* epic *(see p26)*, which describes a great war between two clans.

While the Rig Vedic religion worshipped nature gods, the deities of the later Vedic period were more complex. Later Vedic literature included a remarkable set of Sanskrit treatises called the *Upanishads*, which advocated a philosophical quest for truth, through enquiry. By this period, a social structure based on the caste system had developed. It was earlier occupational, but was now becoming hereditary and increasingly rigid. At the apex were the Brahmins or priests, followed by the *kshatriyas* (rulers and warriors). Below them were *vaishyas* (farmers and traders), and *shudras* (servants and labourers). Sacrifices and rituals to appease the gods were prescribed by the Vedas, and became a part of daily life.

TIMELINE

Early Stone Age relics

8000–4000 BC Mesolithic or Intermediate Stone Age

Indus Valley seal

6000–1000 BC Neolithic or New Stone Age

2500–1800 BC Harappan culture flourishes in the Indus Valley

1800–800 BC Farming communities emerge

1500 BC Aryans migrate to northwest India

1500–1000 BC Period of the *Rig Veda*

1200 BC Iron discovered

1000–600 BC Later Vedic Age. Painted Grey Ware and iron used

Megalithic stone dolmens, South India

950 BC Mahabharata war supposed to have been fought

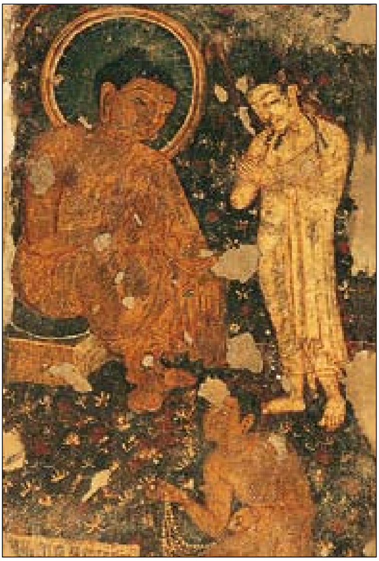
1000 BC–AD100 Megalithic grave sites in southern India

7000 BC **6000** **1000** **900** **600**

◁ **Miniature painting of the Battle of Panipat, 1526, which established the Mughal dynasty in India**

THE AGE OF MAHAVIRA AND BUDDHA

The 6th century BC saw the rise of several urban centres in the north, accompanied by widespread trade. Urbanization led to changes in social stratification, and encouraged the emergence of new religious sects which challenged Brahmin dominance. Chief among these were Buddhism and Jainism, founded respectively by Gautama Siddhartha (566–486 BC) who became the Buddha, and Vardhamana Mahavira (540–467 BC). These religions gained popularity as they had neither caste nor sacrifice, and were open to everyone, including women. The Buddha's simple yet profound teachings *(see p221)* had particularly wide appeal. Mahavira believed in an ascetic life accompanied by truth and non-acquisitiveness *(see p396)*. Both religions disregarded god, discussed the laws of the universe, and advocated ahimsa – not harming any living being. Merchants, traders and others who adopted these religions gained new social status.



Ajanta painting of the Buddha with a monk

THE MAURYAN EMPIRE

The first empire in India was founded in 321 BC when Chandragupta Maurya, an unknown adventurer, defeated the ruling Nanda dynasty of Magadha (in Bihar) and established an empire extending down to the Narmada river in the Deccan. Chandragupta's grandson, Ashoka (269–232 BC) became one of India's greatest rulers, extending the Mauryan Empire to reach from Afghanistan to Karnataka. But after his bloody conquest of Kalinga *(see p309)*, Ashoka gave up violence and became a great patron of Buddhism. He recorded his ethical code on rocks and pillars all over his vast empire, enjoining his subjects to respect others' religions, give liberally to charity and avoid the killing of animals. These edicts were written in the Brahmi script, from which most Indian scripts have evolved. Ashoka also built many stupas enshrining Buddhist relics, including the one at Sanchi *(see pp244–5)*.

Lion capital of Ashokan pillar

CENTRAL ASIAN INVADERS

After Ashoka, the Mauryan Empire soon declined. Local kingdoms arose across North India, while from the northwest a series of invaders, all from Central Asia, established successive dynasties. These included

TIMELINE

566–486 BC Age of Buddha

327–325 Alexander the Great invades northwest India but soon retreats

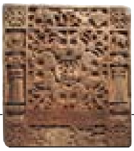
321 BC Accession of Chandragupta Maurya, founder of Mauryan dynasty

269–232 BC Ashoka's reign

189–75 BC Rule of Shunga dynasty

500 BC | **400 BC** | **300 BC** | **200 BC** | **100 BC**

540–467 BC Age of Mahavira



Jain votive plaque from Mathura

315 BC Megasthenes, the Greek writer, visits India

260 BC Ashoka's conquest of Kalinga (now Orissa)

165 BC Menander, Indo-Greek king, rules in northwest India

100 BC–AD 220 Rule of Satavahanas in Deccan the Indo-Greeks from Bactria (200–80 BC), the Scythians or Shakas with many branches (from 80 BC), the Parthians (1st century AD), and the Kushanas (AD 50–300). The territory of Kanishka, the greatest Kushana king, covered the northwest, Kashmir, and most of the Gangetic Valley. He too was a patron of Buddhism. Mahayana Buddhism developed at this time, reflected in two great schools of art, with Buddha sculptures in the Graeco-Roman Gandhara style in the northwest, and in a more indigenous style at Mathura.

Buddha head, Gupta period

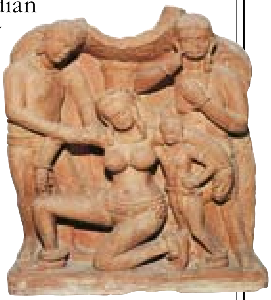
As the Kushanas declined, the Gupta dynasty emerged in northern India, to establish another great empire (AD 320–500). The Gupta period saw a great cultural flowering, with fine sculptures, classical Sanskrit poetry and drama, and learned treatises on mathematics and astronomy produced at this time. In religion, the two Hindu sects of Vaishnavism and Shaivism (followers of Vishnu and Shiva) became prominent, and the Buddhist university of Nalanda was established *(see pp218–19)*. But inroads by the Huns, marauding tribes from Central Asia, contributed to the decline of the Guptas after AD 450.

The next major empire was established by Harsha (AD 606–647) at Kanauj. His long and enlightened rule is described by the Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang *(see p219)*.

RULERS IN THE SOUTH

Meanwhile, in the Deccan region, numerous dynasties arose after the decline of the Mauryas. They included the Satavahanas (100 BC–AD 220), and the Ikshvakus (AD 225–310) in the eastern Deccan, under whom Buddhist stupas were constructed at Amravati *(see p675)* and Nagarjunakonda *(see p676)*. Another Deccan dynasty were the Vakatakas (AD 250–550), during whose reign many of the superb sculptures and paintings at Ajanta *(see pp479–81)* were made. In the western Deccan, the Chalukyas came to power and built great temples at Badami *(see pp536–7)*, Pattadakal *(see pp538–9)* and Aihole *(see pp540–41)*. Their most powerful ruler, Pulakeshin II (AD 608–642), defeated Harsha, and stopped his southward advance.

In the far south, the three kingdoms of the Cheras (now Kerala), Cholas and Pandyas ruled between 400 BC and AD 400. The people of this region were of non-Aryan origin and were known as Dravids. Another major dynasty in the south were the early Pallavas, who ruled from AD 275–550, with their capital at Kanchipuram. During these centuries, cities, craft guilds, and inland and foreign trade flourished across India. The South Indian kingdoms grew rich on trade with Rome till AD 300, exporting luxury goods such as spices, fine silks, precious gems, and exotic creatures such as monkeys and peacocks.


The Drunken Courtesan, 2nd-century Kushana panel

4th-century Iron pillar, Delhi

AD 52 St Thomas in India

250–300 Buddhist stupas of Nagarjunakonda and Amravati are built

300–399 *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are compiled

320–500 Gupta dynasty

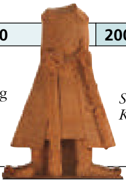
476 Birth of Aryabhata, great astronomer and mathematician

606–647 Harsha's reign

630–644 Hiuen Tsang in India

AD 100 | **200** | **300** | **400** | **500** | **600**

AD 78–110 Reign of Kushana king Kanishka

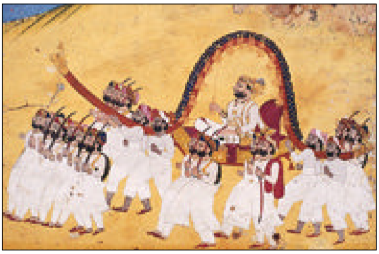

Statue of Kanishka

335–375 Reign of Samudra Gupta

Gold coin of Samudra Gupta

450 Hun invasions begin

608–642 Reign of Pulakeshin II, Chalukyan king



Ceremonial procession of a Rajput prince

NORTHERN KINGDOMS (AD 750–1200)

Kanauj, once the capital of Harsha's empire, centrally located in the Gangetic Plains, had by 750 become the focus of conflict between three major dynasties – the Pratiharas, the Rashtrakutas and the Palas. The Pratiharas were a Rajput clan who ruled in Rajasthan and Malwa, while the Rashtrakutas (740–973) ruled in the northern Deccan. The Palas (750–1150), who were a Buddhist dynasty, ruled Bengal. Each captured Kanauj for a short while, but finally around 836, the Pratiharas gained control and held it for nearly two centuries. Soon other Rajput clans began to establish independent kingdoms.

The origins of the Rajputs are shrouded in mystery, but they are known from the 7th century AD in Western India. Some of them may have been descended from Central Asian tribes who settled in India in the wake of the Hun invasions *(see 43)*. They called themselves *rajaputra* or "sons of kings", and their 36 clans claimed descent from the sun and moon, from fire, or from mythical ancestors, in order to enhance their political and social status. Early Rajput dynasties included the Paramaras in Malwa, the Solankis in Gujarat, the Tomars in Delhi, the Chandelas in Central India, and the Chauhans in Rajasthan, whose best known king, Prithviraj, is still extolled in Rajasthani ballads for his legendary valour and chivalry. During this period, independent kingdoms also existed in Kashmir, the northwest, the northeast, and in Orissa, where the Eastern Ganga dynasty, builders of the great temples at Konark and Puri *(see pp310–12)* ruled.

All these Rajput and non-Rajput dynasties fought frequent wars with each other to gain control of strategic areas, setting the stage for their downfall – they would be unable to form a united front to defend themselves against outside attack. In between wars, however, the rulers and princes lived in great luxury, in grand forts and richly ornamented palaces. Agriculture was well-developed, with over 100 types of cereals cultivated. Trade with the Arab lands flourished, bringing new prosperity to cities, merchants and craftsmen, and leading to the emergence of many new towns. This period also saw a flowering of literature, as well as sculpture and temple architecture. Outstanding examples, apart from those in Orissa, are the Khajuraho temples of the Chandelas *(see pp236–7)*, the Modhera Sun Temple *(see pp418–19)* and the Dilwara marble temples *(see p394)*, which were built under the Solankis of Gujarat.

Woman writing a letter, Khajuraho

TIMELINE

Rajput shield with sun emblem

700 Arab merchants arrive in Western India

736 Dhillika (Delhi) founded by Tomars

740–973 Rule of Rashtrakutas of the Deccan

750–1150 Palas rule Bengal and Bihar

783–1036 Pratiharas rule Rajasthan and Kanauj

800 Adi Shankaracharya preaches his philosophy

871–1216 Rule of Imperial Cholas of Thanjavur

900–1192 Rule of Western Gangas, builders of Shravana Belagola

916–1203 Rule of Chandelas, builders of Khajuraho

700 **750** **800** **850** **900**

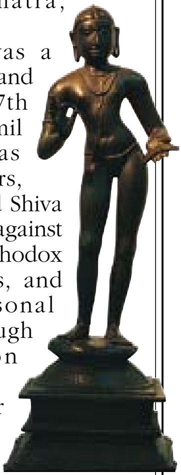
SOUTHERN DYNASTIES (AD 600–1200)
In the Deccan and South India too several dynasties existed between 600 and 1200. A new Pallava dynasty had risen to power in the 6th century, at Kanchipuram. In 642, the Pallava ruler Narasimha Varman I defeated and killed the Chalukya king Pulakeshin II, after which the great Chalukya kingdom declined.

In the late 9th century, the Cholas *(see pp46–7)*, who had gone into decline in the 4th century, reasserted their power. They defeated the Pallavas, the Western Ganga dynasty which ruled near Mysore, and the Pandyas of Madurai, and established their supremacy in the south. They would later be challenged by the Hoysalas of Karnataka *(see p523)* who came to power in the 12th century.

As in northern India in this period, trade flourished in the south, despite constant wars. The Pallavas' maritime trade extended as far as Cambodia, Annam, Java, Sumatra, Malaysia and China.

The Shore Temple of the Pallavas, Mamallapuram

In religion, this was a period of questioning and ferment. From the 7th century, itinerant Tamil poet-saints known as Alvaras and Nayannars, devotees of Vishnu and Shiva respectively, preached against caste divisions and orthodox Brahmanical practices, and emphasized a personal union with god through love and devotion *(bhakti)*. Their teachings had great popular appeal. Other influential sages were Adi Shankaracharya *(see p648)* who travelled across the country, elaborating on the ideas contained in the *Upanishads (see p41)* and challenging Buddhism, Jainism and the *bhakti* cult; and the 11th-century philosopher Ramanuja, who expanded on Shankaracharya's teachings. By the 12th century, with the reforms and revival that had taken place in Hinduism, Buddhism went into decline, except in Eastern India.


Bronze image of a Nayannar saint, 13th century

Great monuments were built in the Deccan and South India in this period, among them the magnificent temples of the Pallavas at Mamallapuram *(see pp578–81)* and Kanchipuram *(see p582)*, and the monolithic image of the Jain saint Bahubali at Shravana Belagola *(see p522)* erected by the Western Ganga kings. In the southwest, the superb rock-cut Kailasanatha Temple *(see pp476–7)* was built at Ellora by the Rashtrakutas.

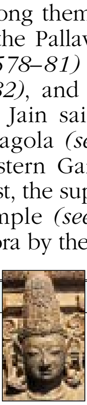


Image of Surya from Konark

974–1233 Rule of Paramaras of Malwa

998–1030 Invasions of Mahmud of Ghazni

1032 Adinatha Temple, Mount Abu, built under Solankis

1110–1342 Hoysala rule

1192 Prithviraj Chauhan defeated by Muhammad of Ghur

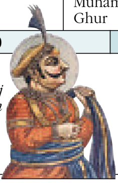
950 **AD 1000** **1050** **1100** **1150** **1200**

973–1192 Rule of Chauhans of Ajmer

974–1238 Rule of Solankis of Gujarat

1050 Ramanuja preaches his Vaishnava philosophy

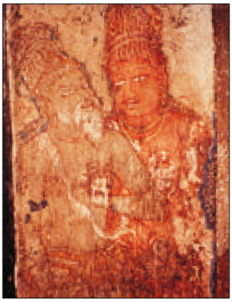
1076–1438 Eastern Gangas of Orissa build Konark and Puri


Prithviraj Chauhan

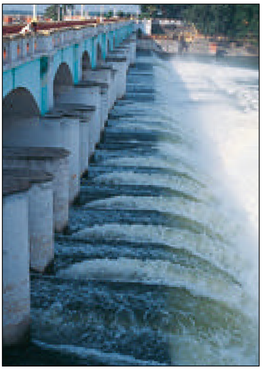
The Chola Dynasty

Chola queen

Between the 9th and 13th centuries, South India was dominated by the Chola dynasty, whose extensive empire covered much of peninsular India. Their two greatest kings were Rajaraja I (985–1014) and Rajendra I (1014–1044), under whom literature, architecture and sculpture reached new heights. They built magnificent temples, endowed with land and enormous wealth, and these became the focal point of their economy, as well as their social and cultural life. In 1216, the Cholas were defeated by the Pandyas, who then became the dominant power in South India.



King Rajaraja I
The first great Chola king, Rajaraja I (left) *subdued other southern kingdoms and conquered Sri Lanka.*

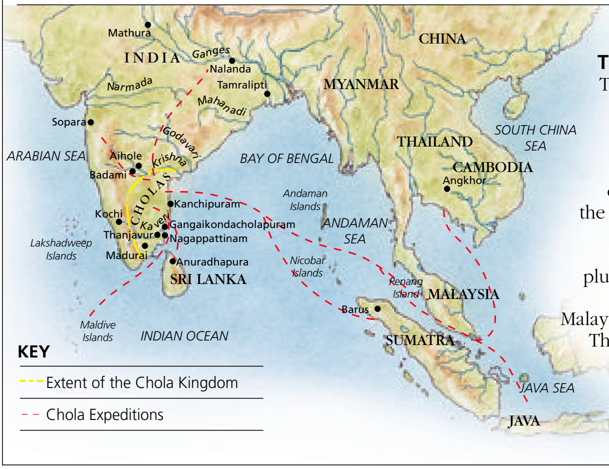


Infrastructure
The Cholas' irrigation dams on the Kaveri river (see p601) *ensured the fertility of their lands. Civil and military officials, provincial chieftains, and elected village committees formed part of their efficient administration.*

Wrestlers formed part of the Chola army.

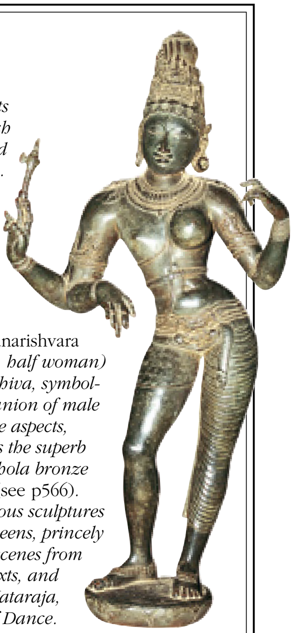
CHOLA WARRIORS
This panel from the temple at Darasuram *(see p593)* celebrates the martial skills of the Cholas. Rajaraja I had a huge army of 31 regiments, which included elephant and horse cavalry, as well as foot soldiers.

Two faces of a copper coin of Rajaraja I

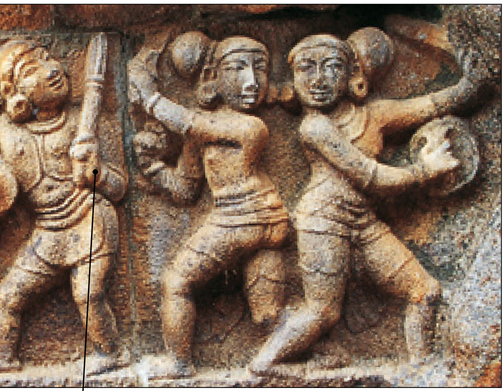

Mathura
INDIA
Ganges
Nalanda
Narmada
Tamralipti
Mahanadi
CHINA
MYANMAR
Sopara
Godavari
ARABIAN SEA
Aihole
Badami
Krishna
BAY OF BENGAL
THAILAND
SOUTH CHINA SEA
CAMBODIA
Angkhor
CHOLAS
Kanchipuram
Kochi
Kaveri
Gangaikondacholapuram
Thanjavur
Nagappattinam
Madurai
Lakshadweep Islands
Andaman Islands
ANDAMAN SEA
Anuradhapura
SRI LANKA
Nicobar Islands
Penang Island
MALAYSIA
Barus
SUMATRA
Maldive Islands
INDIAN OCEAN
JAVA SEA
JAVA
KEY
- - - Extent of the Chola Kingdom
- - Chola Expeditions

THE CHOLA EMPIRE
The Cholas established the largest empire in India since the Gupta empire in the 4th–6th centuries AD. After defeating the rulers of the Deccan, Orissa, Bihar and Bengal, they sent naval expeditions to plunder the wealth of Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Malaysia, Java and Sumatra. They also had trade and diplomatic relations with China, Cambodia and Myanmar.

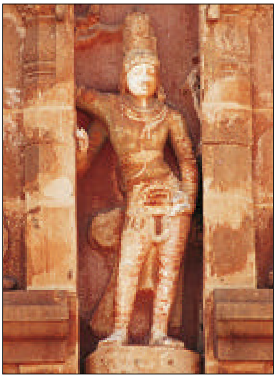
Architecture
The Brihadishvara Temple (see pp598–9) *at Thanjavur, King Rajaraja I's capital, represents the zenith of Chola temple architecture, which is distinguished by its monumental scale and towering sculpted spires and gateways.*



Sculpture
This Ardhanarishvara *(half man, half woman) image of Shiva, symbolizing the union of male and female aspects, exemplifies the superb grace of Chola bronze sculpture* (see p566). *Other famous sculptures portray queens, princely warriors, scenes from Shaivite texts, and Shiva as Nataraja, the God of Dance.*

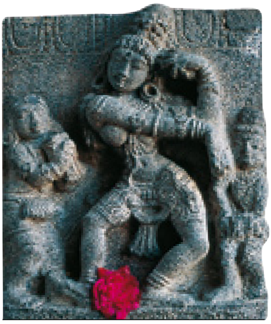


Soldiers
used swords and shields with great skill.



Religion
The Chola kings, who spent lavishly on religion, worshipped Shiva, but Vishnu worship was also popular in South India. This stone sculpture of Harihara, a composite of Shiva and Vishnu, symbolizes a bridge between the two sects.

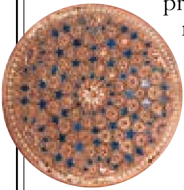
Seat of Power
Gangaikondacholapuram (see p592) *was built in 1035 by King Rajendra I as his new capital, after his successful military expedition to the Gangetic Valley in northern India. The temple here, watched over by Shiva's bull Nandi, also served as a treasury, and a cultural and educational centre.*



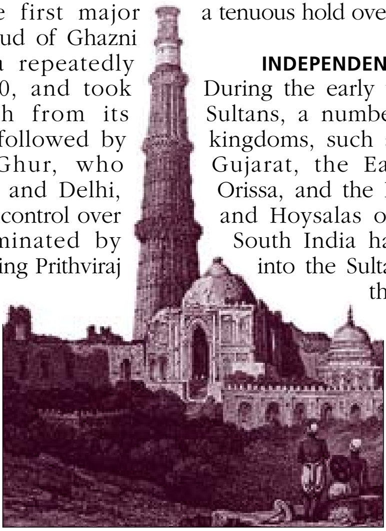
Dance and Music
Hundreds of musicians and dancers performed at the Chola temples every evening, under royal patronage.

THE COMING OF ISLAM (1206–1555)

Constant internal warfare between the different kingdoms, in the north as well as the south, had left them vulnerable to outside attack. From the 11th century, a volatile political situation in Central Asia, coupled with tales of India's fabulous wealth, fuelled a new wave of invasions by Muslim Turkic rulers from the northwest. Many of them stayed on in India to found dynasties, and with them came soldiers, scholars and merchants, artists and Sufi preachers, who brought new ideas in art, architecture, theology and warfare from the Islamic world. These were to have a lasting impact on religion, art, culture and history in the Indian subcontinent.


Ceramic tile detail, Lodi period

The first major invader was Mahmud of Ghazni who raided India repeatedly between 998–1030, and took back vast wealth from its temples. He was followed by Muhammad of Ghur, who conquered Punjab and Delhi, and established his control over areas earlier dominated by Rajputs, after defeating Prithviraj Chauhan in 1192. He was succeeded by his slave, Qutbuddin Aibak (1206–1210), who founded the first of many Muslim dynasties, collectively known as the Delhi Sul-tanate. Qutbuddin built the towering Qutb Minar in Delhi. His successors included Iltutmish and Balban *(see 93)*. Next came the Khiljis (1290–1320), whose ruler Alauddin conquered Gujarat, Rajasthan and Bengal, and made the kings of the Deccan and South India his tributaries. After the Khiljis came the Tughluqs (1320–1414), whose second ruler, Muhammad bin Tughluq, completed the conquest of the Deccan *(see 475)* and South India, and annexed them. But he was unable to maintain control over these distant areas, which soon began to reassert their independence. This process was accelerated by the devastating invasion of northern India by Timur of Samarkand in 1398, which further weakened the power of the Delhi Sultans. The last two Sultanate dynasties, the Sayyids (1413–1451) and the Lodis (1451–1526), were riven with infighting among their nobles, and had only a tenuous hold over their territories.


The 13th-century Qutb Minar in Delhi

INDEPENDENT KINGDOMS

During the early years of the Delhi Sultans, a number of independent kingdoms, such as the Solankis in Gujarat, the Eastern Gangas in Orissa, and the Kakatiyas, Pandyas and Hoysalas of the Deccan and South India had been absorbed into the Sultanate. However, as the Tughluqs began to decline, many new independent states emerged. In 1336, the Hindu Vijayanagar Empire *(see 530–31)* in southern India established its independence,

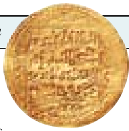
TIMELINE

1206–1290 Rule of first dynasty of Delhi Sultans

1228 Ahoms rule in Assam

1288–93 Venetian traveller Marco Polo visits South India

1320–1414 Rule of Tughluqs


Tughluq coin

1336–1565 Vijayanagar Empire

1347–1518 Bahmani kingdom

1250 1300 1350 1400 1450

1206–1210 Qutbuddin Aibak builds the Qutb Minar

1296–1316 Reign of Alauddin Khilji

Sultanate weaponry

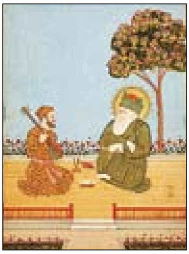
1327 Transfer of capital from Delhi to Daulatabad

1345–1538 Rule of Ilyas Shahis of Bengal

1398 Timur's invasion

1394–1505 Rule of Sharqis of Jaunpur

1440–1518 Kabir, saint-poet of the *bhakti* movement



The 14th-century Sufi saint Nizamuddin

while in 1347 the Muslim kingdom of the Bahmani sultans was founded in the Deccan, by a Tughluq noble. By the early 16th century, the Bahmani kingdom had broken up into the five smaller Muslim kingdoms of Bijapur, Ahmadnagar, Golconda, Berar and Bidar. In 1565, the combined forces of three of these kingdoms defeated the Vijayanagar forces, after which this powerful Hindu empire declined.

Meanwhile, as the Delhi Sultanate declined, its nobles and governors rebelled and founded their own kingdoms in Bengal (1388), Gujarat (1407), Mandu (1401) and Jaunpur (1408). In northeast India, the Ahoms who had migrated from Myanmar in 1228, established a kingdom in Assam *(see p332)*. In Rajasthan too, several Rajput kingdoms, such as Mewar *(see p398)* and Marwar *(see p380)*, reasserted their independence.

NEW CULTURAL INFLUENCES

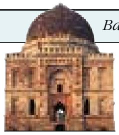
Despite the turbulence throughout India between the 13th and 15th centuries, several new methods and technologies in agriculture, irrigation, administration, arts and crafts were introduced, many of them by the Muslim rulers. Trade flourished with Iran, the Arab countries, Southeast Asia, China and Europe, and a 14th-century historian records that Delhi was the largest city in the eastern Islamic world. The mosques, tombs and forts built by the Delhi Sultans ushered in new trends in architecture; and distinct regional styles, fusing Islamic and Hindu elements, developed at places such as Ahmedabad, Mandu, and the Muslim kingdoms of the Deccan.

In religion, mystical Sufi sects of Islam and saint-poets of the *bhakti* movement, such as Meerabai and Kabir, popularized the practice of religion as devotion to god, rejecting caste hierarchies. Guru Nanak (1494–1530) founded the Sikh religion *(see p103)*, taking elements from the *bhakti* movement and Islam.

THE COMING OF THE MUGHALS

In 1526 Babur, a Central Asian prince descended from Timur, and a brilliant military campaigner, marched into India, overthrew the Lodis at the historic battle of Panipat, and laid the foundations of the Mughal Empire. Mughal rule was briefly interrupted when Babur's son Humayun was overthrown in 1540 by an Afghan chieftain, Sher Shah Sur. But Humayun regained his throne in 1555, and it was left to his son Akbar to consolidate and expand the Mughal Empire. The next two emperors, Jahangir and Shah Jahan, left a legacy of magnificent art and architecture. Aurangzeb, the last great Mughal, expanded the empire by adding new territories in the south.

Frieze of an elephant hunt from Hampi, Vijayanagar



Bara Gumbad, a 15th-century Lodi tomb

1451–1526 Reign of Lodi sultans of Delhi

1469–1539 Guru Nanak, founder of Sikhism

1555 Reconquest of Delhi by Humayun

1571–85 Akbar builds Fatehpur Sikri

1643 Shah Jahan begins Taj Mahal

1674 Shivaji crowned Chhatrapati

1690 Calcutta founded by Job Charnock

1500 1550 1600 1650 1700

1498 Portuguese Vasco da Gama reaches Calicut

1526 Babur defeats Ibrahim Lodi at Panipat

1540 Sher Shah Sur defeats Humayun and takes Delhi

1530 Humayun succeeds Babur

1600 Queen Elizabeth I grants charter to East India Company

1556 Akbar becomes Mughal emperor

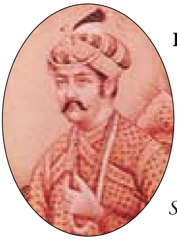
1661 Bombay transferred from the Portuguese to the English

The Great Mughals

Mughal helmet

The Mughals, like their contemporaries the Ottomans of Turkey, the Safavids of Iran and the Tudors of England, were a powerful and influential dynasty. They ruled India for over 300 years, their empire extending at its height from Kandahar in the northwest to Bengal in the east, and from Kashmir in the north to the Deccan in the south. Great patrons of literature, architecture, and arts and crafts, which reached new heights under their patronage, the Mughals established a rich pluralistic culture, blending the best of Islamic and Hindu traditions.

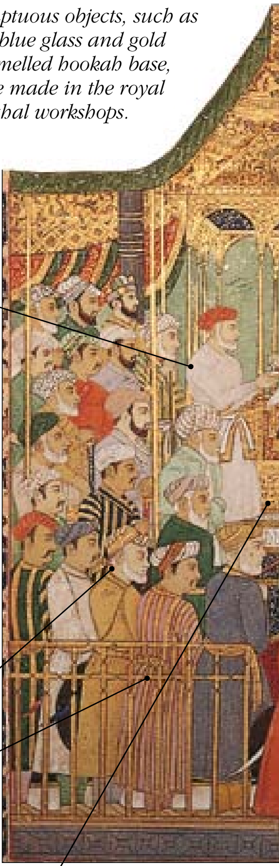
Decorative Arts
Sumptuous objects, such as this blue glass and gold enamelled hookah base, were made in the royal Mughal workshops.



Emperor Akbar
The greatest Mughal, Akbar (r.1556–1605) was a brilliant administrator and enlightened ruler. He built the city of Fatehpur Sikri (see pp180–83).

Weaponry
War elephants formed an important part of the Mughal army. They were controlled and commanded with sharp but beautifully crafted goads.

Mughal Coins
Gold mohurs *struck during the reigns of Akbar and his son Jahangir are renowned for their fine calligraphy.*

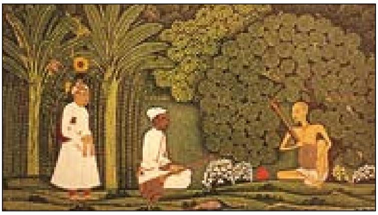


A nobleman presents a gift to the emperor.

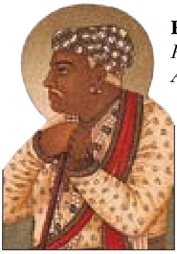
Court robes and turbans indicated status and religion.

Rajput princes were loyal allies.

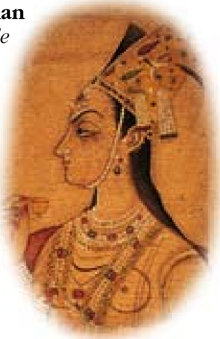
Diwan-i-Khas was the special audience hall.



The Nine Jewels
Akbar gathered at his court brilliant men from different professions, whom he called his "nine jewels". They included the musician Tansen (centre) *who, it is said, could light a lamp with the power of his voice.*



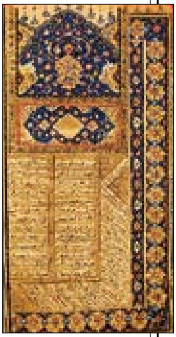
Political Alliances
Raja Man Singh I of Amber gave his daughter in marriage to Akbar, beginning a tradition of Mughal-Rajput alliances that would bring peace and prosperity to the Mughal Empire.



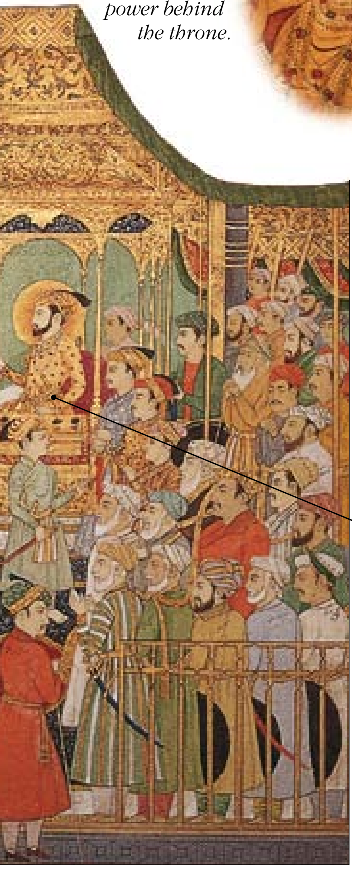
Nur Jahan
A formidable combination of brains and beauty, Jahangir's Persian-born queen (b.1577) was the real power behind the throne.

Architecture
A monument of ethereal beauty, built by Shah Jahan for his wife, the Taj Mahal (see pp172–5) *represents the zenith of Mughal architecture.*

Jewellery
The legendary wealth of the Mughals included fabulous jewellery, such as this pendant encrusted with large, flawless diamonds.



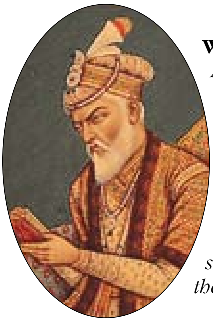
Illuminated Manuscripts
Works of literature, history and biography were produced on gilded paper with beautiful calligraphy and illustrations.



Shah Jahan on his splendid throne.

SHAH JAHAN'S COURT

The splendour of the Mughal court is illustrated in this 17th-century painting of Emperor Shah Jahan, with his nobles grouped in strict hierarchical order around the throne. Mughal emperors, whose capitals were at Agra and later Delhi, used glittering court rituals and pageantry to display their supreme authority, as they took stock of the state of affairs in their empire.



Wars of Succession
Aurangzeb, the last great Mughal, came to power after imprisoning his father Shah Jahan, and killing his brothers. Ruthless and bigoted, he alienated many of his Hindu subjects, but expanded the Mughal Empire.

THE MUGHAL DYNASTY

The Mughal Empire flourished from 1526 until Aurangzeb's death in 1707. After that, the dynasty gradually declined under weak rulers, and finally ended in 1857. Its first six rulers were:

Babur (r.1526–30)
Humayun (r.1530–56)
Akbar (r.1556–1605)
Jahangir (r.1605–27)
Shah Jahan (r.1627–58)
Aurangzeb (r.1658–1707)

THE DECLINE OF THE MUGHALS

The death of Emperor Aurangzeb, the last great Mughal, in 1707, heralded the decline of the Mughal Empire. He left a ruined economy and weak successors, and independent states now began to be established by the Rajputs in Rajasthan, the nawabs of Avadh and Bengal, the nizams of Hyderabad, and the Wodeyars of Mysore. Two new powers were the Marathas in the Deccan and the Sikhs in the north. The Marathas under their leader Shivaji *(see p471)* expanded their territories after 1647. The Sikhs, originally a religious group, began to acquire territory in the hill states of the north, Jammu and Punjab. Under Ranjit Singh *(see p104)*, they became a powerful state in the early 19th century.

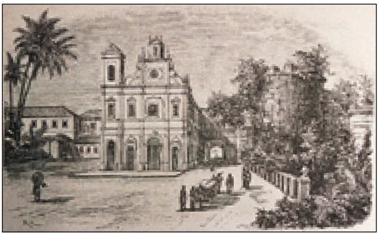
Sahib and mahout on elephant

THE EUROPEANS

But India would no longer remain a battleground for indigenous groups and dynasties – European traders, who had begun to arrive in the 16th century, were to change the course of its history. To set up trading factories in areas where their agents had settled, the Europeans began to acquire land, and fought numerous wars, both against one another and against Indian rulers. The trading groups were organized into companies, and included the Portuguese, French, Dutch and English. The Portuguese, who were the first to arrive, lost most of their territories to the Dutch and English by the end of the 17th century, retaining only Goa and a few adjacent enclaves. The Dutch, in turn, lost out to the English. The 18th century saw major conflicts between the French and English, with three Carnatic Wars fought between 1740 and 1763, in South India and involving Indian powers on both sides. Ultimately, the English were the victors, the French retaining only Pondicherry and a few small settlements.

THE RISE OF THE BRITISH

Meanwhile, the English East India Company was acquiring territory in the north by gaining trade concessions from the Mughal emperors from the early 17th century onwards. They defeated the nawabs of Bengal in the Battles of Plassey (Palasi) in 1757 and Buxar in 1764. By this time, the invasions of Nadir Shah of Persia in 1739, and Ahmad Shah Abdali of Afghanistan in 1761, had further weakened the Mughals. In the battle with Abdali the Marathas, who had gained control of Delhi, suffered a crushing defeat. From these beginnings, the British began to expand their power. Robert Clive *(see p561)*, responsible for many of their successes, became Governor of Bengal in 1757. From 1773, the Parliament in England started to


Rachol Church in Portuguese Goa

TIMELINE

1707 Death of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb

Nadir Shah's battle axe

1739 Nadir Shah of Persia invades Delhi

1761 Ahmed Shah Abdali of Afghanistan defeats Marathas in the Third Battle of Panipat

1774–85 Warren Hastings, first Governor General

A Maratha soldier

1750

1775

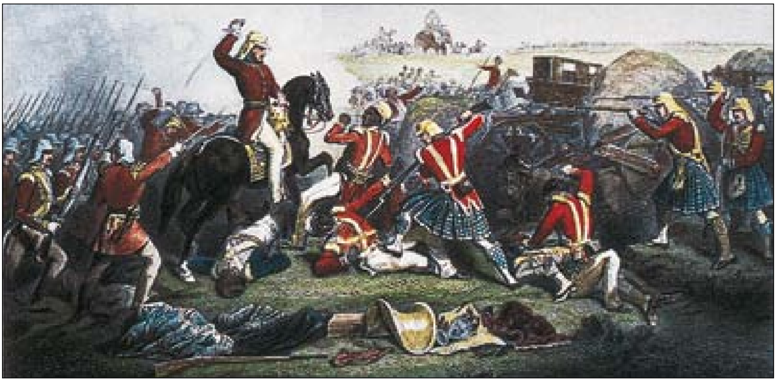
1727 The city of Jaipur founded by Sawai Jai Singh II

1757 Battle of Plassey, British defeat Siraj-ud-daulah, Nawab of Bengal

1764 Battle of Buxar, British granted Diwani of Bengal

1789 Marathas occupy Delhi

1799 Tipu Sultan defeated



Sepoys (Indian foot soldiers of the East India Company) rebelling at Fatehpur during the Mutiny of 1857

exercise some control over the Company. Warren Hastings, appointed Governor in 1772, was soon given the title of Governor General of Bengal (1774–1785), with supervisory powers over all the Company's territories. Under him and his successors (who from 1833 onwards were known as governors general of India), expansion continued, with major wars being fought against the Marathas, the Punjab, and Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan in Mysore. Other states too were conquered or brought under British control by various policies, such as the Subsidiary Alliance, under which Indian states had to maintain British troops and allow a British official to reside in the state and advise them. Another policy was the Doctrine of Lapse, under which states "lapsed" to the Company if a ruler died without a direct male heir. Thus by 1857, the Company's control extended over much of India, and obtained them vast profits. After the Industrial Revolution, raw materials from India were exported to Britain, and machine-made British goods, particularly textiles, flooded the country. Artisans were impoverished, and crafts, towns and cities declined. Discontent with the alien rulers was growing. Unlike earlier conquerors of India, the British maintained their separateness, and their base in another country. In 1857, a combination of factors led to a major revolt, which began as a soldiers' mutiny, but soon had widespread civilian participation. Thousands of rebels marched towards Delhi in May and proclaimed the titular Mughal ruler, Bahadur Shah Zafar, emperor of India. By September the British had regained control over Delhi. Bahadur Shah was exiled to Rangoon (Yangon), and his young sons executed. Other rebel areas were also brutally taken over, ending the first major challenge to British rule.

Toy showing Tipu's tiger mauling a British soldier

1803 British capture Delhi from the Marathas

Queen Victoria's head on a Company coin

1853 First railway from Bombay to Thana

1857 The Indian Mutiny

1863 Simla becomes summer capital of the Raj

1800

1825

1850

1799–1839 Reign of Ranjit Singh

1818 Rajasthani kingdoms accept British control

1829 Governor General Bentinck bans *sati*, the Hindu practice of widow burning

Nawab Wajid Ali Shah of Avadh

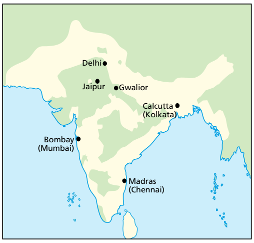
1856 Annexation of Avadh

1858 Crown takes over the East India Company, Lord Canning becomes the first Viceroy

Pax Britannica

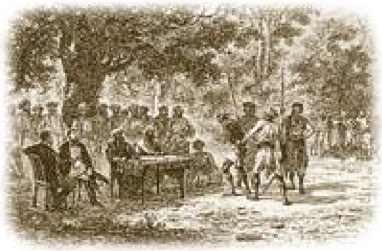
The Victoria Cross

The foundations of British rule, or the Raj, were laid after the Indian Mutiny of 1857, which revealed the unpopularity of the East India Company's rule. By an Act of Parliament in 1858, the Company's rule ended, and its Indian territories became part of the British Empire, to be ruled through a viceroy. Though the *raison d'être* of the Raj was economic profit and political control, its abiding legacy was the political unification of the subcontinent, together with the introduction of Western education, a centralized administrative system, and a network of railways.

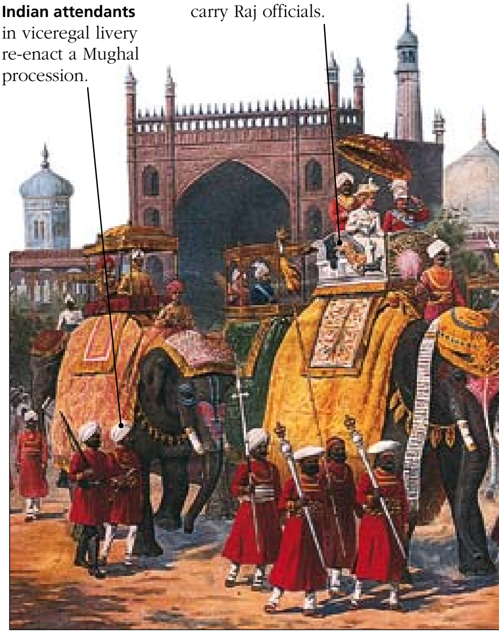


BRITISH INDIA

☐ *British territory, 1858*

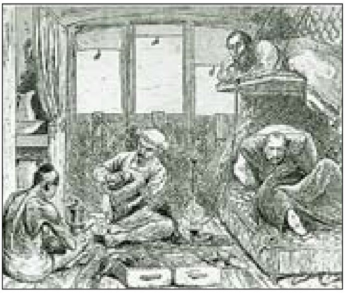


Administration
Some 2,000 British officers, members of the prestigious Indian Civil Service, ruled over 300 million Indians. Dubbed the "Steel Frame of India", they brought British-style law and order to the remotest corners of the country.



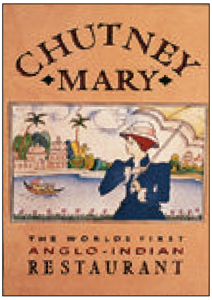
Indian attendants in viceregal livery re-enact a Mughal procession.

Caparisoned elephants carry Raj officials.

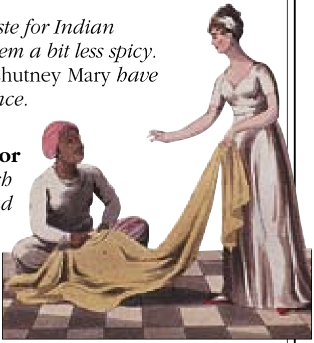


A Sahib Travelling
A vast rail network was set up to facilitate commerce and travel. This 19th-century print shows first-class travel, a privilege of "whites only". The sahibs travelled in style, with several servants in attendance.

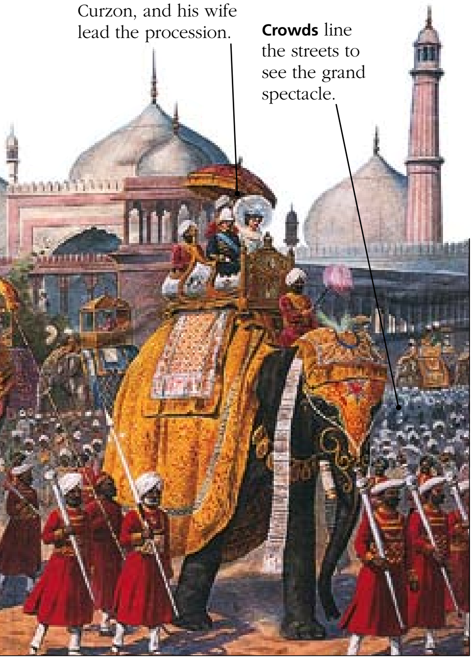
Lord Curzon
Viceroy from 1899 to 1905, Curzon believed British rule was necessary to civilize "backward" India. Paradoxically, the Western-style educational institutions set up by the Raj helped make Indians more aware of the injustices of colonial rule.



Raj Cuisine
The British soon developed a taste for Indian curries, toned down to make them a bit less spicy. Restaurants such as London's Chutney Mary *have been popular in Britain ever since.*



Memsahib and Tailor
Despite the climate, the British clung to their own dress and lifestyle. Children were sent "home" to study, and a large Indian staff enabled a leisurely lifestyle.



The Viceroy, Lord Curzon, and his wife lead the procession.

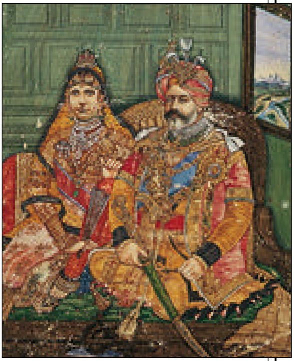
Crowds line the streets to see the grand spectacle.

THE IMPERIAL DURBAR, 1903

This painting of Curzon's Delhi Durbar (1903), held to celebrate the coronation of Edward VII in London, shows a procession winding through the historic streets of Delhi. Held periodically, such assemblies announced the grandeur and the political might of British Rule in India.

Cemeteries of the Raj
The harsh Indian climate took a heavy toll on British women and children. Their tombs fill the Raj's graveyards.

Colonial Architecture
The most imposing edifice in New Delhi, built as the imperial capital between 1911 and 1931, was the viceroy's sprawling residence.

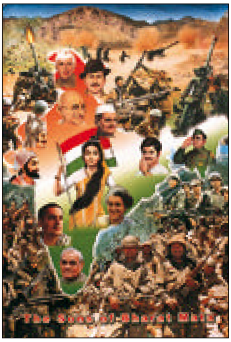


The Company School
Paintings by Indian artists, such as this fanciful portrait of King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra in Indian royal attire, were specially commissioned for the British market.

Crowds of supporters around Mahatma Gandhi

THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT

After 1857, nationalist aspirations began to grow, and the founding of the Indian National Congress in 1885 gave Indians a platform from which to demand self-goverment. A turning point came in 1919, when General Reginald Dyer's troops fired on an unarmed crowd in Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar, which was protesting against the suppression of civil liberties. More than 300 people died, and Indians of every caste, class and religion united in their outrage at British brutality. By 1920, the leadership of the National Movement was taken over by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, a Gujarati lawyer who had recently returned from South Africa. Popularly known as Mahatma or "great soul", Gandhi's charismatic appeal and identification with the poor of India converted the freedom struggle into a mass movement. His strategy was to launch a moral crusade of non-violent resistance *(satyagraha)* to British laws and institutions, followed by periods of constructive village work. Working alongside Gandhi were several outstanding Indians, among whom was Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.



A popular poster of political heroes, past and present

At first, the movement for freedom was ruthlessly suppressed, but after World War II, Britain no longer had the strength or the will to enforce its rule. Meanwhile, from 1940 onwards, the Muslim League, led by Mohammad Ali Jinnah, had been demanding an independent state of Pakistan for Muslims.

Finally, at midnight on 14/15 August, 1947, the era of British rule ended, and the new nations of India and Pakistan were born. Casting a dark shadow over the celebrations was the Partition of the Indian subcontinent into two countries, accompanied by mass migrations of millions of Hindus and Muslims across the borders, and communal riots in which thousands were killed.

INDEPENDENT INDIA

After Independence, the new government integrated more than 550 princely states, which had been semi-independent in British days, into the Indian Union. In late 1947, a war between India and Pakistan took place over the accession to India of the princely state of Kashmir, and this continues to be a major point of dispute between the two countries. In 1948, Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated by a Hindu fanatic who felt he favoured Muslims. This so shocked and grieved both communities that peace was finally restored.

As India's first prime

TIMELINE

1885 Indian National Congress founded

1905 Partition of Bengal

1910

1911 Transfer of capital to Delhi announced at the Delhi Durbar

1913 Rabindranath Tagore wins Nobel Prize

1919 Jallianwala Bagh massacre

1920

1920 Non-cooperation Movement launched by Gandhi

1930

1930–32 Civil Disobedience movement

1940

1940 Muslim League adopts the Pakistan Resolution

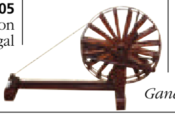
1942 Quit India Movement

1947 India attains Independence, Partition

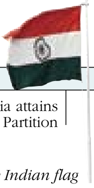
1948 Mahatma Gandhi assassinated

1950

1952 First General Election, with universal suffrage



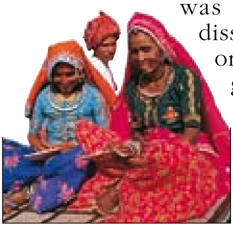
Gandhi's spinning wheel

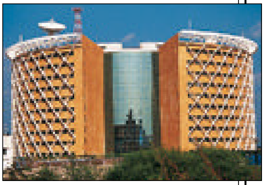


The Indian flag

Nehru, with his daughter Indira and grandson Rajiv

minister, Jawaharlal Nehru laid the foundations of a modern nation state, with a democratic, secular polity, a strong industrial base and a planned economy, with Non-alignment as the keystone of its foreign policy. In 1962, China invaded north-east India and then withdrew after inflicting a humiliating defeat on the Indian army. This brought about much-needed modernization of India's military machine. Nehru died in May 1964, and in 1966 his daughter Indira Gandhi became prime minister. She continued his pro-poor and socialist policies, and in 1971, she stripped the Indian princes of their titles and abolished their privy purses. Later in the same year, she aided East Pakistan in its struggle against West Pakistan, leading to the formation of Bangladesh. But in 1975, perceiving a threat to her power and popularity, she declared a State of Emergency, under which the press was censored and dissidents imprisoned. When the general elections took place, in 1977, she was defeated, and the Congress party lost power for the first time since Independence. By 1980, Indira and the Congress were back in power, but a military action against Sikh terrorists holed up in their sacred Golden Temple led to her assassination by her Sikh guards in 1984. Her son, Rajiv Gandhi, took over in a sympathy wave, and began liberalizing the economy. He was assassinated by a Sri Lankan Tamil separatist during the 1991 election campaign, but economic reforms encouraging private enterprise and foreign investment continued. Since 1996, a series of coalition governments have been in power, with the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) emerging as a major force to challenge the Congress.


Rural women learning to read during a literacy campaign


A newly-built Info-tech park in Hyderabad

Significant progress has been made in the 60 years since Independence, though unemployment and poverty continue to exist. The literacy rate has risen from 18 per cent in 1951 to 66 per cent in 2001. In urban areas, women can be seen working in all professions. From frequent food shortages in the 1950s, India now has a food surplus, and its industrial base has expanded to produce a wide range of goods, from toys to aircraft. Economic reforms have flooded the market with consumer goods, and helped the rise of a prosperous middle class. In the field of information technology, there has been a veritable revolution, with India now established as a world leader in software development.

1961 Goa liberated from Portuguese rule

1962 India-China war

1971 Birth of Bangladesh

1992 Destruction of Babri Masjid leads to communal riots

1991 Rajiv Gandhi assassinated

1998 BJP comes to power. AB Vajpayee becomes Prime Minister

2001 Gujarat Earthquake

2004 Tsunami hits coastal Tamil Nadu and the Andamans

1960 **1970** **1980** **1990** **2000**

1965 War with Pakistan

1971 Princes lose titles and privy purses

1975 Indira Gandhi declares Emergency

1982 India sends scientific team to Antarctica

1998 Amartya Sen wins the Nobel Prize for Economics

1999 India-Pakistan conflict in Kargil

2000 Population reaches 1 billion

2007 Pratibha Patil becomes the first woman President of India

DELHI & THE NORTH

INTRODUCING DELHI & THE NORTH 60–67

DELHI 68–97

HARYANA & PUNJAB 98–107

HIMACHAL PRADESH 108–133

LADAKH, JAMMU & KASHMIR 134–155

Introducing Delhi & the North

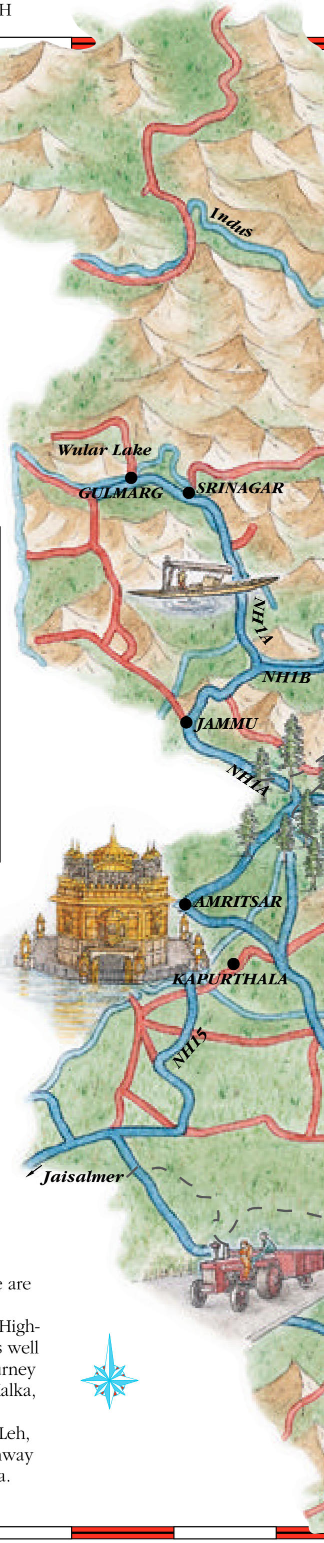
As rich in natural beauty as in historic sites, North India is a much visited region. A wide variety of landscapes can be enjoyed here, from the snowcapped peaks, alpine valleys and pine forests of Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh, to the flat plains of Haryana and Punjab, dappled with fields of golden mustard and wheat. In sharp contrast is the urban sprawl of Delhi, a bustling metropolis and the nation's capital. Ladakh's dramatically sited cliff top monasteries and pristine trekking trails are major attractions for visitors, as are Shimla's Raj-era ambience and Dharamsala's distinctive Tibetan flavour. Amritsar's great Sikh shrine, the Golden Temple, and Delhi's magnificent Mughal monuments are other popular destinations.

The lush green landscape of Srinagar, in the Kashmir Valley

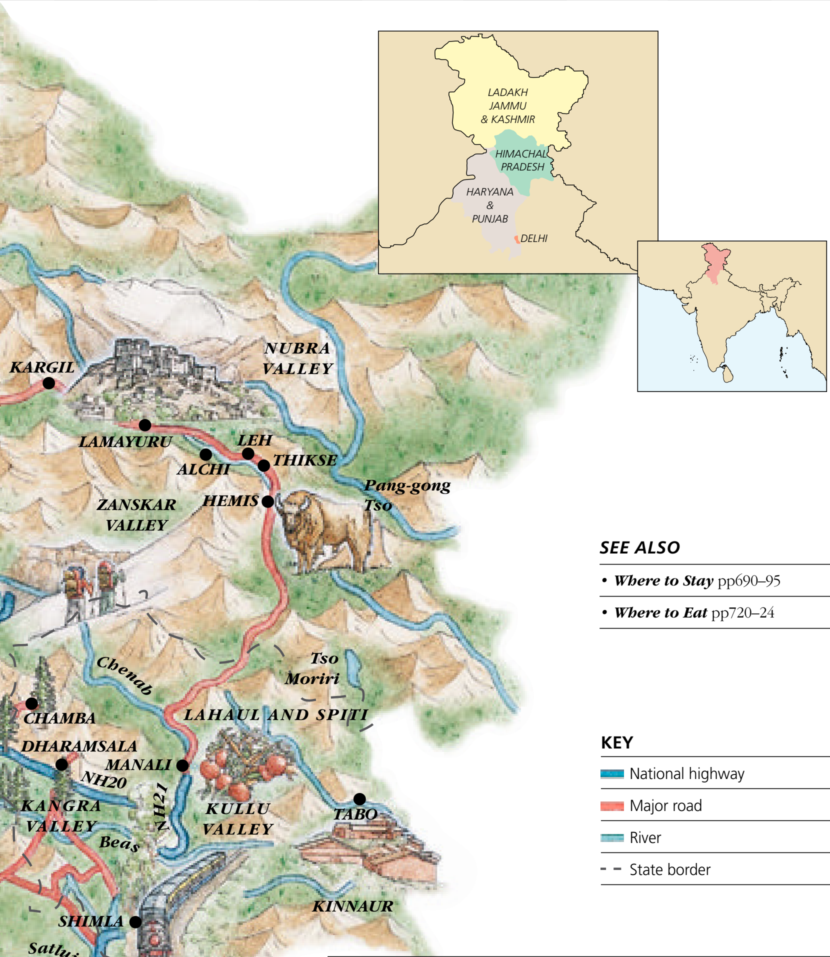
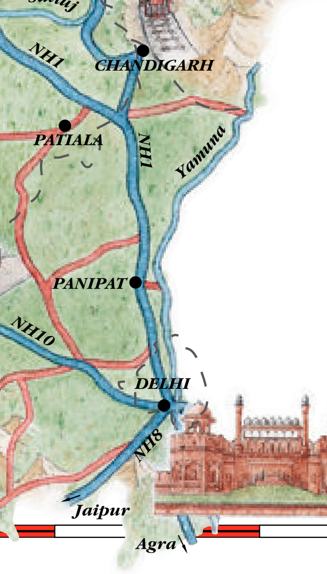
Punjabi farmers enjoying a ride in a tractor-trailer

GETTING AROUND

Delhi has good air, rail and road links to the rest of the region. There are daily flights to Leh, Srinagar, Amritsar and Chandigarh. Amritsar and Chandigarh are also connected to Delhi by fast trains and a National Highway. From Chandigarh, there are air services to Shimla and Manali as well as road links with frequent bus services. A particularly charming journey is on the Toy Train, "Shivalik Queen" *(see p777)*, which goes from Kalka, near Chandigarh, to Shimla. Other great journeys, with spectacular mountain scenery en route, include the trip by road from Manali to Leh, and the journey along the old Hindustan-Tibet Road (National Highway 22), which runs from Shimla to the India-China border near Shipkila.



◁ **A local woman crossing a barley field, nestled between the barren hills of Spiti *(see p130)*, Himachal Pradesh**



LADAKH
JAMMU
& KASHMIR
HIMACHAL
PRADESH
HARYANA
&
PUNJAB
DELHI
KARGIL
NUBRA
VALLEY
LAMAYURU
LEH
ALCHI
THIKSE
Pang-gong
Tso
ZANSKAR
VALLEY
HEMIS
Chenab
Tso
Moriri
CHAMBA
LAHAUL AND SPITI
DHARAMSALA
MANALI
NH20
NH21
KANGRA
VALLEY
KULLU
VALLEY
TABO
Beas
KINNAUR
SHIMLA
Satluj
NH1
CHANDIGARH
PATIALA
NH1
Yamuna
PANIPAT
NH10
DELHI
NH8
Jaipur
Agra

SEE ALSO

- ***Where to Stay*** pp690–95
- ***Where to Eat*** pp720–24

KEY

🟦	National highway
🟥	Major road
🟦	River
- -	State border

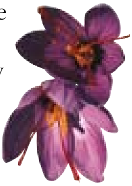
Autumn colours along the banks of the Indus river in Ladakh

0 km 100

0 miles 100

A PORTRAIT OF DELHI & THE NORTH

The peaks of the Himalayas, the most spectacular natural barrier in the world, mark the boundaries of the area that extends northwards from Delhi. A variety of cultures and landscapes lies within this region. Delhi's bustling urban sprawl gradually gives way to the lush, flat farmlands of Punjab and Haryana, north of which are the serene mountainous lands of Himachal Pradesh and Ladakh.



Saffron flowers

In geological terms, the Himalayas are very young *(see pp64–5)*, but for humans, they evoke a feeling of timeless eternity, and have been a source of spiritual inspiration for Indians for thousands of years. The monasteries and temples situated on their slopes perfectly complement the profound beauty of these mountains.

Most visitors to the region start out from Delhi, the country's capital, a city that is a blend of several historical eras. Its grand Mughal past is evident in its many superb monuments and tombs. The elegant tree-lined avenues and bungalows of New Delhi evoke the period of the British rule. Yet both coexist alongside the modern world of internet cafés, shopping arcades and posh multiplex cinemas. Delhi's population swelled massively to accommodate the millions of people displaced by the Partition of India in 1947, when the western portion of Punjab became part of Pakistan. Homeless refugees from west Punjab have since prospered in Delhi, and now dominate the city's commercial life. As the nation's capital, Delhi continues to attract people from all over India, giving this vibrant city a resolutely cosmopolitan air.

The hardworking, resilient Punjabis have also transformed their home state with modern farming techniques, introduced in the 1960s. As a result of this "Green Revolution", Punjab and

A deep blue glacial lake near Thamsar Pass in Himachal Pradesh

Mustard fields in the fertile plains of Punjab

Haryana today produce much of India's wheat and rice, and one-third of its dairy products. Punjabis are also among the most successful immigrant communities in the world, and today, almost every family has at least one member living abroad, whether in London, New York, Vancouver or Hong Kong, as portrayed in Mira Nair's film, *Monsoon Wedding* (2001).

A Delhi wedding procession

The name "Punjab" refers to the five *(panch)* rivers *(ab)* which traverse this green land. The sixth "river", if one can call it that, is the legendary Grand Trunk Road *(see p179)* . Travelling almost anywhere north of Delhi, one is bound to use this route. The kind of traffic may have changed since Rudyard Kipling's *(see p255)* day, and it is now rather prosaically rechristened National Highway 1, but it still lives up to the author's description: "Such a river of life exists nowhere in the world".

During the Raj-era, the British would escape from the summer heat of the plains and head for the hills. Today's visitors follow in their footsteps all year round. Himachal Pradesh has a number of delightful hill stations, such as Shimla, Kasauli and Dalhousie. The hillsides are covered with orchards, and apple farming is an important part of the state's economy. Himachal Pradesh also offers spectacular treks, some of which start from Dharamsala, a town with a distinct Tibetan flavour as the home of the Dalai Lama *(see p122)*

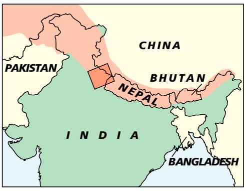
Jammu and Kashmir, which includes Ladakh, is India's northernmost state. Tragically, the militant separatist movement in the beautiful Kashmir Valley has effectively put an end to tourism there. But Ladakh remains an oasis of peace. Often perceived as having a purely Buddhist culture, its population is, in fact, almost equally divided between Buddhists and Muslims, who coexist here in harmony. Ladakh's uniquely syncretic culture, together with its astonishing natural beauty and the dramatic architecture of its monasteries, make it one of India's most fascinating areas.

A Kashmiri family gathered around their samovar

The Great Himalayas

Himalayan magpie

The highest and youngest mountains in the world, the Himalayan Range stretches for 2,500 km (1,553 miles) along the Indian subcontinent's northern borders, separating it from Central Asia and the Tibetan Plateau. The Himalayas were formed about 30 million years ago, when the Indian plate broke away from Gondwanaland, drifted northwards and collided with the Eurasian landmass, driving the earth's crust up to form three parallel ranges, which include 30 of the world's highest peaks.



LOCATOR MAP

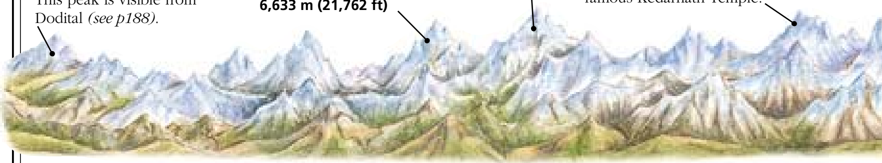
- 🟧 *The Himalayas*
- 🟥 *Area illustrated below*

High altitude desert, *where little grows except lichen, is found above the tree line. One such area is between Diskit and Hundar in Ladakh's Nubra Valley* (see p143), *which has sand dunes and camels.*

Glaciers *are especially abundant in the Western Himalayas. They are the source of three great Indian rivers – the Indus, the Ganges and the Brahmaputra.*

THE HIMALAYAS

Fourteen peaks in the Himalayas tower above 8,000 m (26,247 ft), including Mount Everest, the world's highest peak at 8,848 m (29,029 ft). The two highest peaks in India are Kanchendzonga *(see p302)* at 8,598 m (28,209 ft), and Nanda Devi (seen above) at 7,817 m (25,646 ft).



Bandar Punch ("Monkey Tail"), 6,316 m (20,722 ft), attracts many mountaineers. This peak is visible from Dodital *(see p188)*.

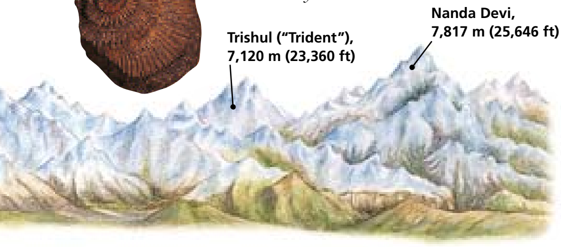
Jaonali Peak, 6,633 m (21,762 ft)

Pithwar Peak, 6,904 m (22,651 ft)

Kedarnath, 6,940 m (22,769 ft), is regarded as Shiva's sacred mountain. Below it is the famous Kedarnath Temple.

A traditional Himalayan dwelling *is generally built of stone and wood, or sun-dried mud bricks. Typically it has two or three storeys, the lowest level filled with stone to provide stability during earthquakes, the next level housing livestock, and the top floor where the family rooms are laid out.*

Marine fossils *and rocks that have been found in high altitudes in the Himalayas, and even on peaks such as Mount Everest, testify that these mountains were once a part of the Tethys seabed.*

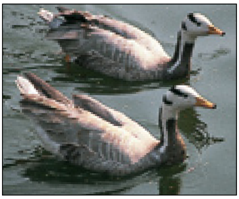

Trishul ("Trident"), 7,120 m (23,360 ft)
Nanda Devi, 7,817 m (25,646 ft)

FLORA AND FAUNA

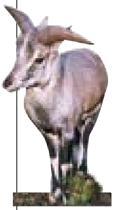
Subtropical jungles, temperate coniferous forests and alpine meadows are among the varied vegetation zones in the Himalayas. They support a rich and abundant variety of plant and animal life.

Brahma Kamal (Saussurea obvallata) *is a popular offering at most hill temples.*

Deodar (Cedrus deodara) *is a towering conifer found in temperate forests in the Western Himalayas.*



Bar-headed geese (Anser indicus) *are attractive water birds that breed in high altitude lakes in Ladakh.*



Bharal (Pseudois nayaur) *are called blue sheep because of the blue sheen on their grey coats. They inhabit the harsh, stony slopes above the snow line.*

The snow leopard (Uncia uncia), *now endangered, lives above 4,000 m (13,123 ft). It preys on wild sheep and hares.*

The Flavours of Delhi & the North

Several culinary strands cross the region of Delhi and the Punjab, which, despite national boundaries, begins at the Khyber Pass, now in Pakistan. Wheat is the staple food and a variety of breads *(rotis)* are baked in a *tandoor*, the domed clay oven, also used to barbecue marinated meats and vegetables. Rich curries, legacies of the imperial kitchen, are still prepared as is the post-Partition cuisine of butter chicken, *tikkas* and *dal makhani*. Kashmiri flavours are a delicate blend of yoghurt, spices, aniseed, dried ginger powder, red chillies and a pinch of asafetida (Hindus) or garlic (Muslims). Rice and mutton are the standard fare of both communities.

Strands of saffron

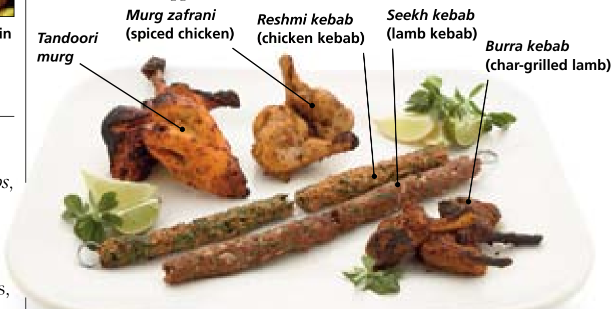
Mangoes and other fruit on sale in a Delhi fresh produce market

DELHI

Centuries of Muslim rule have given Delhi its succulent *shami* and *burra kebabs*, as well as creamy *kormas* and *salans*, rich *biryanis* and *pulaos*, all delicately spiced main dishes. Once served at the courts of kings, emperors and sultans, this imperial cuisine is still eaten by most people.

Today, Delhi is a city of immigrants and each community has brought its own food. By far the most dominant is Punjabi and "Frontier" cuisine. The ubiquitous *tandoori* chicken, served with pickled onions and mint chutney was "invented" in Daryaganj's Moti Mahal restaurant in 1947. Other popular foods are the *dosa* and *idli* from South India *(see pp554–5)*.

Delhi has an abundance of street foods. *Bhutta* (corn-on-the-cob) roasting on makeshift stoves, fruit juices and cooling sherbets sold from handcarts and the range of *chaat* (savoury snacks) are legendary. Equally famous are *jelabis* (crisply fried batter in syrup) *phirni* (rice pudding) and crushed almond or pistachio *kulfi* (ice cream), garnished with noodle ribbons.


Tandoori murg
Murg zafrani (spiced chicken)
Reshmi kebab (chicken kebab)
Seekh kebab (lamb kebab)
Burra kebab (char-grilled lamb)
A tandoori platter with a selection of barbecued meats

LOCAL DISHES AND SPECIALITIES

From the old city of Delhi comes the *nahari*, the delectable mutton (which can mean goat meat too in India) dish that is cooked through the night and served at breakfast with *naans*. Snacks include the popular *chhole-bhatura* and vegetable *pakora* (Indian tempura). Specialities of the Punjab include *dal makhani*, *baigan ka bharta* (smoked and puréed aubergines (eggplant)), and various stuffed breads. Vegetarian dishes in Kashmir are few, the most famous being *haaq* (a special spinach), *aloo dum* (potatoes in yoghurt), and *chaman* (cottage cheese in gravy). Lamb or mutton dishes include *rishta* (meatballs) cooked in a sauce and *tabak maz* (fried ribs cooked in milk).

Mint and chillies

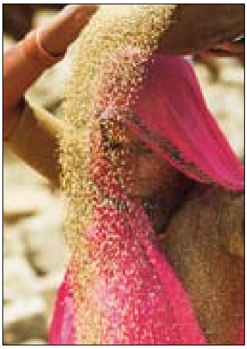
Aloo puri *is a spicy potato dish eaten with puffy deep-fried bread and a mint and coriander chutney.*

Shikras **(skiffs) carrying fresh vegetables, Dal Lake, Srinagar, Kashmir**

PUNJAB

Punjabi food is robust and linked to the lifestyle of the largely farming communities. It is dominated by milk and its products, such as yoghurt and *paneer* (cottage cheese), prepared in innumerable ways. Popular drinks are *lassi* (buttermilk) and a variant, *chhach*, made with ginger, coriander and powdered cumin. Wheat is the staple cereal and dishes include *aloo parathas* (fried bread stuffed with potatoes and other vegetables and eaten with yoghurt) and the seasonal *sarson ka saag* (mustard greens) and *makke* (corn) *ki roti*.

Although vegetarian food is the main fare, the non-vegetarian dishes from this state are a mixture of Northwest Frontier and Mughlai cuisines. The hub of Punjabi cuisine is Amritsar, famous for its batter-fried fish. The *dhabas* (eateries) that dot the main highways offer the best local food as lorry drivers demand a fresh, hot and tasty meal.



Winnowing wheat, a common sight in the Punjab

KASHMIR

Food here ranges from a simple family meal to a 36-course wedding banquet, the *wazawan*, where guests are seated on cushioned rugs in groups of four, in front of large silver platters. Rice, grown in the Kashmir Valley, mutton, chicken or fish are of prime importance. The generous use of yoghurt in the sauces gives the dishes a creamy consistency, while the locally-grown saffron adds flavour and colour. Walnuts and almonds are also added for texture and flavour. A meal ends with *kahva*, a green tea flavoured with cardamom and cinnamon.

ON THE MENU

Aloo tikki Potato cutlets.

Chhole-bhatura Spiced chickpeas and puffy bread.

Dal makhani Lentils flavoured with ginger, garlic, spices and a dollop of cream.

Gushtaba Large meatballs flavoured with fresh mint.

Phirni A sweet rice pudding, garnished with nuts.

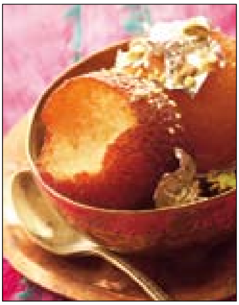
Shami kebab Mincemeat patties flavoured with spices.

Tandoori murg Barbecued spring chicken.

Yakhni A yoghurt and mutton or lotus root curry with a delicate hint of fennel.

Rogan josh *has pieces of mutton simmered in yoghurt which is then thickened with* khoya *(solidified milk).*

Dal *combines lentils with a heady mix of onions, garlic and spices. It is considered India's "soul food".*



Gulab jamuns *are deep-fried milk and flour balls in a sweet syrup flavoured with rosewater and cardamom.*

INDIA

DELHI

Delhi, the capital of India, is also its third largest city, with a population of about 16 million. Its strategic location along the north-south, east-west route has given it a focal position in Indian history, and many great empires have been ruled from here. The monuments and ruins of these are scattered throughout the city, often cheek by jowl with modern structures and highrise towers.

The vast urban sprawl of contemporary Delhi is, in fact, a conglomeration of several distinct enclaves, chief among which are Old Delhi, with its 16th- and 17th-century Mughal-built monuments and congested souk-like bazaars; and New Delhi with its wide avenues, grand vistas and colonial mansions, built by the British in the 1930s as their imperial capital. New Delhi has government buildings and also houses the Diplomatic Enclave where all the embassies are located. The picturesque 12th-century ruins of citadels built by the first Islamic rulers can be seen in the Qutb-Mehrauli area, and the affluent new middle class suburbs of South Delhi lie close by. Slums and shanty towns dot the outer fringes of the city.

All the contrasts and contradictions of India are particularly visible in the capital: denim-clad youngsters rubbing shoulders with robed sadhus (holy men), and bullock carts travelling alongside the latest luxury cars. Adding to Delhi's fascinating diversity is the fact that it is largely a city of migrants. After the violent Partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, millions of refugees, mainly from West Punjab, flocked here in search of a new life. Since then there has been a steady influx of people from all over India. Yet each regional community has retained its distinct cultural identity, making Delhi less a melting pot than a *thali* (platter) whose offerings may be savoured singly or in interesting combinations.

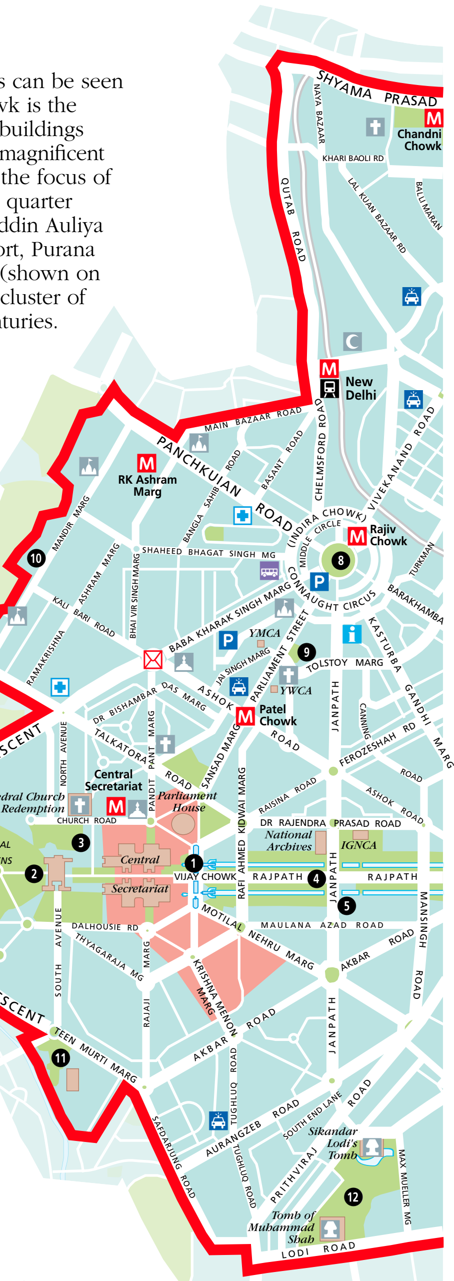
A view of the old city around Jami Masjid, with its bustling streets and crowded buildings

◁ **India Gate and the elegant Statue Canopy designed by Sir Edwin Landseer Lutyens, completed in 1931**

Exploring Delhi

Some of Delhi's most impressive buildings can be seen in the area shown in this map. Vijay Chowk is the vantage point for the grand sweep of Raj buildings grouped on Raisina Hill. To the north, the magnificent Jami Masjid with its busy hive of lanes, is the focus of Old Delhi. To the southeast, the medieval quarter around the tomb of the Sufi saint Nizamuddin Auliya leads along Mathura Road to the ruined fort, Purana Qila. And to the south, the Mehrauli area (shown on the Greater Delhi map), has a fascinating cluster of monuments built in the 12th and 13th centuries.

Vijay Chowk *(see pp72–3)*, at the base of Raisina Hill, surrounded by government offices



SHYAMA PRASAD
NAYA BAZAAR
Chandni Chowk
KHARI BAOLI RD
QUTAB ROAD
LAL KUAN BAZAAR RD
BALLI MARAN
New Delhi
MAIN BAZAAR ROAD
CHELMSFORD ROAD
VIVEKANAND ROAD
PANCHKUIAN ROAD
RK Ashram Marg
BASANT ROAD
SAHIB ROAD
BANGLA
MANDIR MARG
ASHRAM MARG
INDIRA CHOWK)
(MIDDLE CIRCLE
Rajiv Chowk
TURKMAN
SHAHEED BHAGAT SINGH MG
BHAI VIR SINGH MARG
KALI BARI ROAD
CONNAUGHT CIRCUS
BARAKHAMBA
BABA KHARAK SINGH MARG
YMCA
RAMAKRISHNA
PARLIAMENT STREET
JAI SINGH MARG
TOLSTOY MARG
KASTURBA GANDHI MARG
ASHOKA ROAD
YWCA
Patel Chowk
DR BISHAMBAR DAS MARG
JANPATH
CANNING
FEROZESHAH RD
TALKATORA ROAD
PANDIT PANT MARG
SANSAD MARG
CRESCENT
NORTH AVENUE
Central Secretariat
Cathedral Church of the Redemption
Parliament House
KIDWAI MARG
RAISINA ROAD
ASHOK ROAD
CHURCH ROAD
DR RAJENDRA PRASAD ROAD
National Archives
IGNCA
MUGHAL GARDENS
Central
WILLINGDON
VIJAY CHOWK
RAJPATH
RAFI AHMED
Secretariat
MANSINGH ROAD
WILLINGDON CRESCENT
DALHOUSIE RD
SOUTH AVENUE
MOTILAL NEHRU MARG
MAULANA AZAD ROAD
THYAGARAJA MG
KRISHNA MENON MARG
AKBAR ROAD
RAJAJI MARG
TEEN MURTI MARG
TUGHLUQ ROAD
SAFDARJUNG ROAD
AURANGZEB ROAD
SOUTH END LANE
Sikandar Lodi's Tomb
PRITHVIRAJ ROAD
MAX MUELLER MG
Tomb of Muhammad Shah
LODI ROAD
1
2
3
4
5
8
9
10
11
12

SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

Historic Buildings, Streets & Neighbourhoods

Around Kashmiri Gate ㉒
Around Vijay Chowk pp72–3 ①
Chandni Chowk pp84–5 ⑰
Coronation Memorial ㉓
Feroze Shah Kotla ㉑
Hauz Khas ㉘
Humayun's Tomb p83 ⑯
Jahanpanah ㉚
Jantar Mantar ⑨
Khirkee ㉙
Mehrauli Archaeological Park pp92–4 ㉛
Nizamuddin Complex ⑮
Purana Qila ⑬
Raisina Hill ③
Rajghat ⑳
Rajpath ④
Rashtrapati Bhavan ②
Red Fort ⑲
Safdarjung's Tomb ㉖
Tughluqabad ㉝

Churches, Temples & Mosques

Baha'i House of Worship ㉞
Jami Masjid ⑱
Lakshmi Narayan Mandir ⑩

Museums

Crafts Museum pp80–81 ⑭
National Gallery of Modern Art ⑥
National Museum pp76–7 ⑤
Nehru Memorial Museum and Library ⑪
Sanskriti Museum ㉜
The National Rail Museum ㉕

Shops & Markets

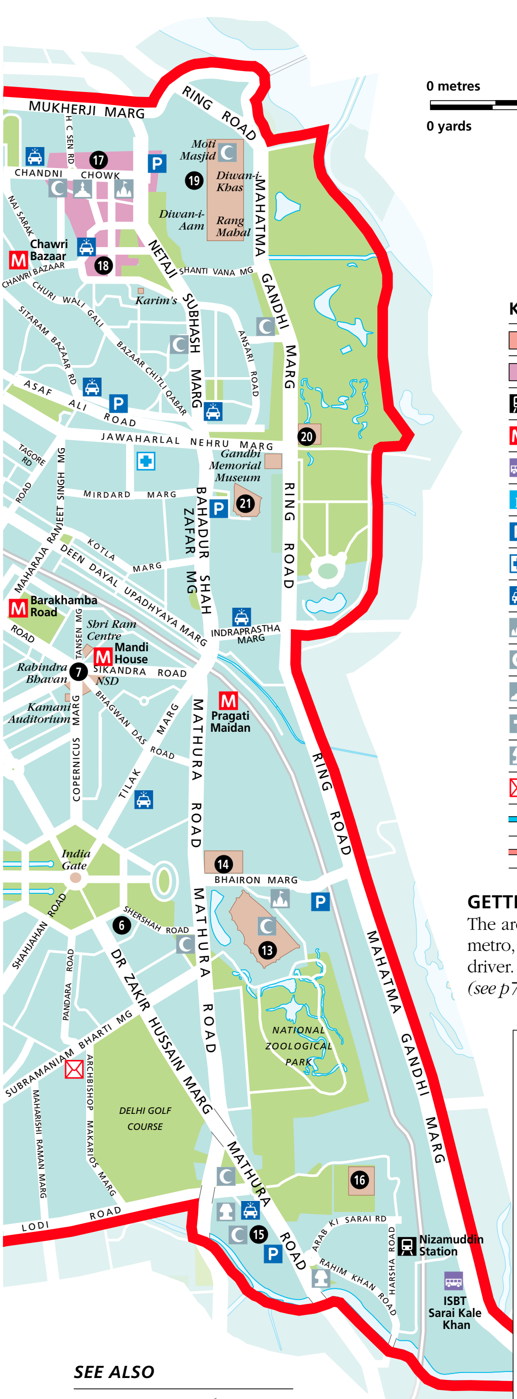
Connaught Place ⑧
INA Market ㉗

Parks & Gardens

Lodi Gardens ⑫
The Ridge ㉔

Theatres & Art Galleries

Mandi House Complex ⑦


0 metres 800
0 yards 800
MUKHERJI MARG
H C SEN RD
CHANDNI CHOWK
17
Moti Masjid
19
Diwan-i-Khas
Diwan-i-Aam
Rang Mahal
NAI SARAK
Chawri Bazaar
18
CHAWRI BAZAAR
CHURI WALI GALI
SITARAM BAZAAR RD
BAZAAR CHITLI QABAR
Karim's
NETAJI SUBHASH MARG
SHANTI VANA MG
RING ROAD
MAHATMA GANDHI MARG
ANSARI ROAD
ASAF ALI ROAD
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU MARG
20
Gandhi Memorial Museum
TAGORE RD
RANJEET SINGH MG
MIRDARD MARG
21
BAHADUR SHAH ZAFAR MG
RING ROAD
KOTLA MARG
DEEN DAYAL UPADHYAYA MARG
MAHARAJA ROAD
Barakhamba Road
Shri Ram Centre
TANSEN MG
Mandi House
INDRAPRASTHA MARG
Rabindra Bhavan
7
SIKANDRA ROAD
NSD
Kamani Auditorium
COPERNICUS MARG
BHAGWAN DAS ROAD
TILAK MARG
Pragati Maidan
MATHURA ROAD
RING ROAD
India Gate
14
BHAIRON MARG
SHAHJAHAN ROAD
6
SHERSHAH ROAD
13
DR ZAKIR HUSSAIN MARG
MATHURA ROAD
MAHATMA GANDHI MARG
PANDARA ROAD
NATIONAL ZOOLOGICAL PARK
SUBRAMANIAM BHARTI MG
ARCHBISHOP MAKARIOS MARG
MAHARISHI RAMAN MARG
DELHI GOLF COURSE
16
LODI ROAD
MATHURA ROAD
15
ARAB KI SARAI RD
HARSHA ROAD
RAHIM KHAN ROAD
Nizamuddin Station
ISBT Sarai Kale Khan

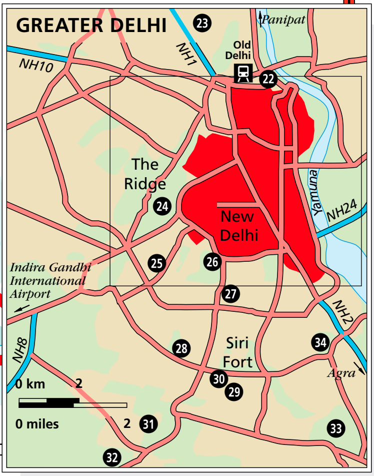
LOCATOR MAP

KEY

- ▨ Around Vijay Chowk: *see pp72–3*
- ▨ Chandni Chowk: *see pp84–5*
- 🚉 Railway station
- Ⓜ Metro station
- 🚌 Bus station
- ℹ Tourist information
- 🅿 Parking
- ✚ Hospital
- 🚓 Police station
- Temple
- ☪ Mosque
- Gurdwara
- ✝ Church
- Tomb
- ☒ Post office
- ▬ National highway
- ▬ Major road

GETTING AROUND

The areas shown here are best covered by the metro, taxi, auto-rickshaw or a hired car and driver. Guided coach tours run by Delhi Tourism *(see p761)* also cover many sights. Avoid buses!


GREATER DELHI
23
Panipat
NH1
NH10
Old Delhi
22
The Ridge
24
Yamuna
NH24
New Delhi
25
26
Indira Gandhi International Airport
27
NH2
NH8
28
Siri Fort
34
30
29
Agra
0 km 2
0 miles 2
31
33
32

SEE ALSO

- ***Where to Stay*** pp690–91
- ***Where to Eat*** pp720–21

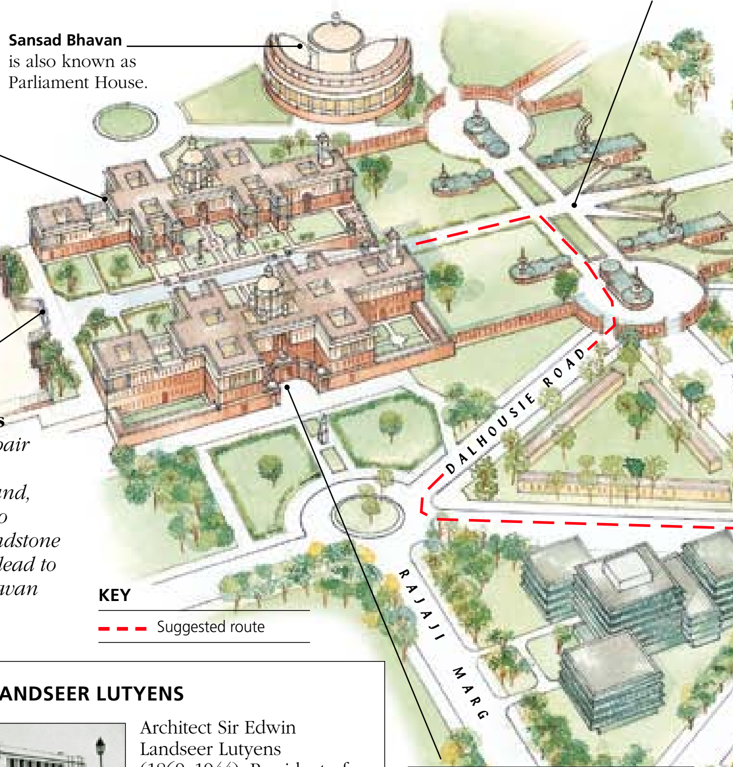
Street-by-Street: Around Vijay Chowk ❶

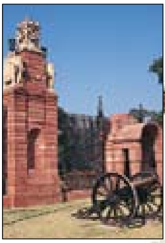
Vijay Chowk or "Victory Square", a large piazza at the base of Raisina Hill, was planned as a commanding approach to the Viceroy's House, now the Indian President's residence. This is where the "Beating of the Retreat" ceremony takes place each year on 29 January *(see p37)*. Vijay Chowk is flanked by two long, classical Secretariat buildings (the North and South Blocks), which house several ministries as well as the Prime Minister's Office. Ministers and government officials live in spacious bungalows on the tree-shaded avenues nearby. From Vijay Chowk, Lutyens's grand Central Vista lies ahead – large trees and fountains line the lawns of Rajpath up to India Gate, the Statue Canopy and the National Stadium at the far end.

★ Vijay Chowk
This piazza, flanked by red sandstone obelisk-shaped fountains, faces a grand vista.

North Block, designed by Herbert Baker, has an imposing Central Hall.

Sansad Bhavan is also known as Parliament House.





The Iron Gates
Copied from a pair Lutyens saw in Chiswick, England, these are set into ornamental sandstone gateposts. They lead to Rashtrapati Bhavan (see p74).

KEY

– – – Suggested route

SIR EDWIN LANDSEER LUTYENS

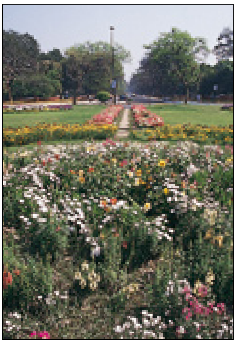
The red sandstone National Archives, designed by Lutyens

Architect Sir Edwin Landseer Lutyens (1869–1944), President of the Royal Academy from 1938 to 1944, was commissioned to design India's new capital in 1911. With Herbert Baker, his colleague, it took him 20 years to build the city in a unique style that combined Western Classicism with Indian decorative motifs. The result is an impressive and harmonious synthesis, with Neo-Mughal gardens and grand vistas meeting at verdant roundabouts. Delayed by World War I and quarrels between Baker and Lutyens, spiralling costs met by Indian revenues led Mahatma Gandhi to term it a "white elephant". Ironically, the British lived here for only 16 years.

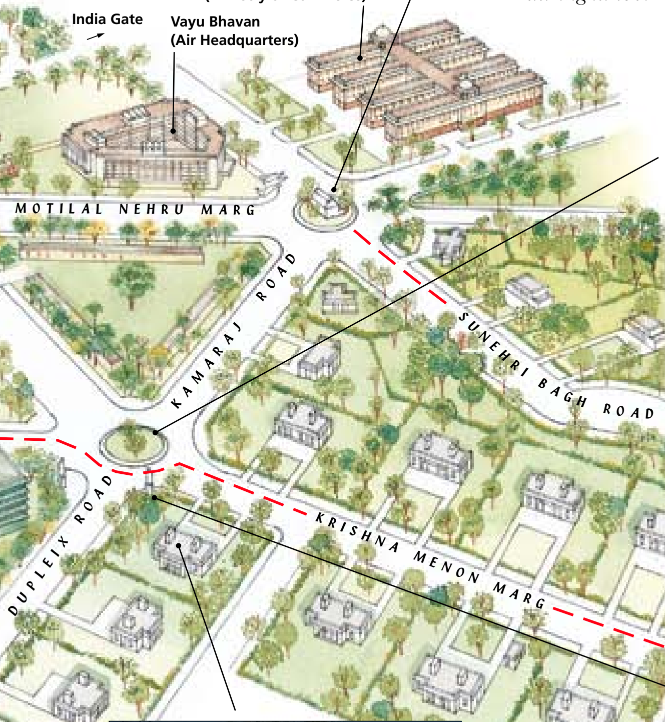
★ South Block
The Prime Minister's Office and the Defence Ministry are located within this section of the Secretariat.

Sunehri Bagh Mosque
This simple 18th-century mosque, built by a saint called Sayyid Sahib, makes for a picturesque roundabout. The adjoining Sunehri Bagh Road is lined with shady trees – a feature of all Lutyens's avenues.

LOCATOR MAP
See Delhi Map pp70–71



Roundabout
Beautifully landscaped road intersections are a haven for workers during lunch.


Udyog Bhavan (Ministry of Commerce)
India Gate
Vayu Bhavan (Air Headquarters)
MOTILAL NEHRU MARG
KAMARAJ ROAD
SUNEHRI BAGH ROAD
KRISHNA MENON MARG
DUPLEIX ROAD
0 metres 25
0 yards 25

Statue of Kamaraj
K Kamaraj was Congress Party President (1963–6).

★ Bungalow-lined Avenues
Strict building bylaws preserve the original architecture of the colonial bungalows in the tree-lined avenues of this area.

STAR SIGHTS

- ★ Vijay Chowk
- ★ South Block
- ★ Bungalow-lined Avenues

Ornate iron gates leading to Rashtrapati Bhavan, designed by Lutyens

Rashtrapati Bhavan ❷

***Tel** (011) 2301 5321. ☛ 9:30am –1pm, 2–4:30pm Mon, Wed, Fri & Sat.* **Change of Guard Ceremony** ***Tel** (011) 2301 3592. Apr–Oct: 8am; Nov–Mar: 10am Sat only.* **Mughal Gardens** ○ *Feb–Mar.*

Designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens *(see p72)* as the British Viceroy's Palace, Rashtrapati Bhavan, situated at the crest of Raisina Hill, is now the official residence of the President of India. A vast, copper-clad cupola soars over this elegant beige and red sandstone building which covers an area of 2 ha (5 acres). The *pièce de résistance* is the circular Durbar Hall, situated directly beneath the dome, where all important state ceremonies and functions are held.

To the west, the beautifully landscaped grounds include Rashtrapati Bhavan's famed **Mughal Gardens**. These terraced gardens with water-courses and fountains built on three levels, are open to visitors in the spring months.

Raisina Hill ❸

Cathedral Church of the Redemption ***Tel** (011) 2309 2396.* ○ *8am–noon; 4–6pm daily.*

The barren, treeless grounds around Raisina Hill were selected by the British as the site of the new capital. Now a heavily-guarded, verdant area, it is dominated by stately buildings such as the twin North and South Blocks *(see p72)* of the **Secretariat**. The two virtually identical buildings that rise from the top of Raisina Hill, were designed by Sir Herbert Baker, who also designed the grand circular **Sansad Bhavan** (Parliament House) to the north of Vijay Chowk. Both the Rajya Sabha (Upper House) and the Lok Sabha (House of the People) convene here when Parliament is in session. After the December 2001 terrorist attack, Sansad Bhavan is now closed to visitors.

Behind Sansad Bhavan is the Anglican **Cathedral Church of the Redemption**, inspired by Palladio's Church of Il Redentore in Venice. Originally built for senior British officials in 1931, it is now the diocese of the Bishop of the Church of North India.

Sansad Bhavan, where the Constitution of India was drafted

Rajpath ❹

National Archives Janpath. ***Tel** (011) 2338 7509.* ○ *9:30am–6pm Mon–Fri.* ● *Public hols.* **Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts** Janpath. ***Tel** (011) 2338 4938.* ○ *9am–5:30pm Mon-Fri.*

Running east of Vijay Chowk is Rajpath, a two-mile-long avenue used for parades, with ornamental fountains, canals and lawns on either side. The **National Archives**, situated at the intersection with Janpath, houses a major collection of state records and private papers. Opposite is the **Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts** with an archive of rare manuscripts. It holds many national and international exhibitions and symposia.

At Rajpath's eastern end is **India Gate**, a massive red sandstone arch, built to commemorate the Indian and British soldiers who died in World War I, and those who fell in battle in the North-West Frontier Province and the Third Afghan War. An eternal flame burns in memory of the soldiers who died in the 1971 India-Pakistan War. Facing India Gate is the sandstone canopy where a statue of King George V was installed in 1936. The statue is now at Coronation Park *(see p88)* and the canopy stands empty.

India Gate

National Museum ❺

See pp76–7.

National Gallery of Modern Art ❻

Jaipur House, near India Gate. ***Tel*** *(011) 2338 5378.* ○ *10am–5pm Tue–Sun.* ● *Mon & public hols.* 🛍 🚻

Jaipur House, the former residence of the maharajas of Jaipur, is one of India's largest museums of modern art, covering the period from the mid-19th century to the present day. Its excellent collections include works by modern Indian painters such as Jamini Roy, Rabindranath Tagore, Raja Ravi Varma and Amrita Shergill, as well as contemporary artists such as Ram Kumar and Anjolie Ela Menon. Also on display are works by British artists such as Thomas Daniell and his nephew William Daniell, and an interesting group of "Company Paintings" – 18th- and 19th-century works by Indian artists commissioned specially for the British market.

Mandi House Complex ❼

Triveni Kala Sangam Tansen Marg. ***Tel*** *(011) 2335 6139.* ○ *9:30am–5pm Mon–Sat.* ● *public hols.* 🛍 ☕ **Rabindra Bhavan** Ferozeshah Rd. ***Tel*** *(011) 2338 1833.* 🛍 **Kamani Auditorium** Copernicus Marg. ***Tel*** *(011) 2338 8084.* **Shri Ram Centre** Safdar Hashmi Marg. ***Tel*** *(011) 2335 2410.* 🛍 ☕ **National School of Drama** Bhagwan Das Rd. ***Tel*** *(011) 2338 8249.* For ***Tickets*** see ***Entertainment*** *p96.*

Mandi House, today the offices of the state-owned television centre, lends its name to this cultural complex encircling the roundabout. **Triveni Kala Sangam** has contemporary art galleries, an open air amphitheatre for concerts and plays, a popular café and a bookshop specializing in Indian arts publications. The state-sponsored **Rabindra Bhavan** arts complex houses the national academies of literature (Sahitya Akademi), fine arts and sculpture (Lalit Kala Akademi), and the performing arts (Sangeet Natak Akademi) in separate wings. All three have libraries and display galleries that sell reproductions. Regular exhibitions of photography and ceramics are also held here. **Kamani Auditorium**, the **Shri Ram Centre** and the **National School of Drama** are vibrant centres for theatre, music and dance performances.

Connaught Place, the British-built shopping complex in New Delhi

Mirrorwork skirts on sale at Janpath

Connaught Place ❽

Shops ○ *10:30am–8pm Mon–Sat.* ● *public hols.*

Opened in 1931 and named after the Duke of Connaught, this shopping complex, with its Palladian archways and stuccoed colonnades, was designed by Robert Tor Russell as a deliberate contrast to the noises and chaos of an Indian bazaar. The central circle of Connaught Place has now been renamed Rajiv Chowk, and the outer circle Indira Chowk. Its arcades and pavements spill over with *paan* kiosks, book stalls and shoe shine boys, while the eclectic mix of shops is interspersed with eateries and cinema halls. Though no longer Delhi's premier shopping area, its shaded arcades are pleasant to stroll through. The recently built Central Park features an amphitheatre, 21 fountains and plush lawns. Nearby popular shopping centres include the state emporia at **Baba Kharak Singh Marg** and the stalls along **Janpath**. **Cottage Industries** *(see p97)* is also located on Janpath.

REPUBLIC DAY PARADE

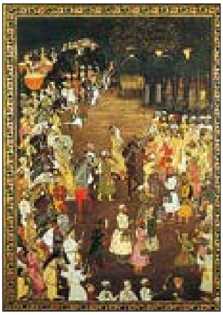
Republic Day Parade

Ever since 1950, when India became a republic, this parade on 26 January has attracted large crowds despite the often chilly weather. Soldiers and sailors, war veterans and school children, and even elephants and camels, march smartly down Rajpath. Especially popular are the folk dancers and the inventive floats representing each state of the country. A ceremonial flypast by the Indian Air Force signals the end of the always colourful parade.

The National Museum ❺

Dancing girl from 2500 BC

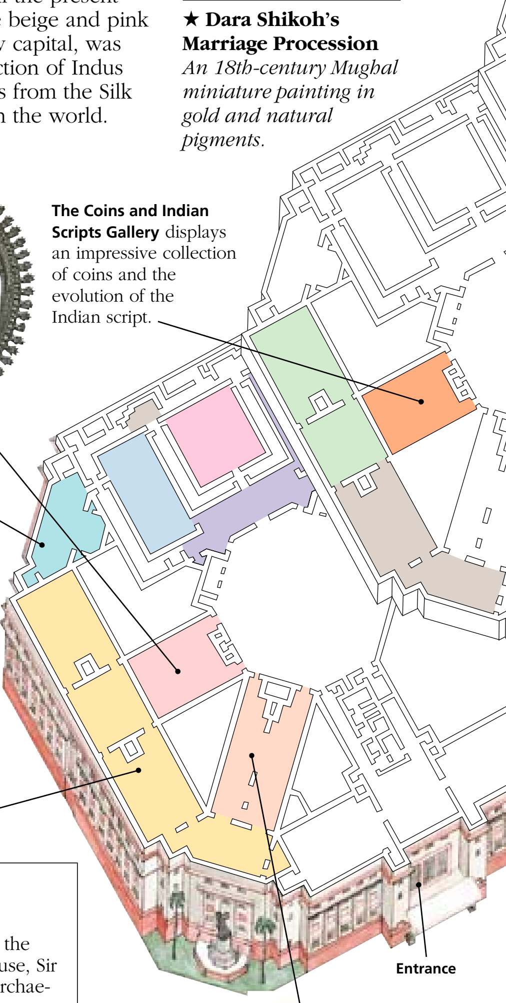
Five millennia of Indian history can be explored at the National Museum, with a collection of more than 200,000 pieces of Indian art. The nucleus collection of about 1,000 artifacts was sent to London in the winter of 1948–9 for an exhibition at the Royal Academy's Burlington House. After its return, it was housed in the Durbar Hall of Rashtrapati Bhavan until the present building, built of the same beige and pink stone as the imposing new capital, was complete in 1960. The Museum's collection of Indus Valley relics and Central Asian treasures from the Silk Route is considered among the finest in the world.



★ Dara Shikoh's Marriage Procession
An 18th-century Mughal miniature painting in gold and natural pigments.

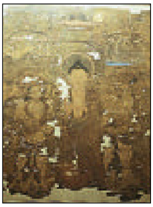
★ Nataraja
This 12th-century Chola statue of the cosmic dance of Lord Shiva is the centre-piece of the museum's South Indian bronzes.

The Coins and Indian Scripts Gallery displays an impressive collection of coins and the evolution of the Indian script.



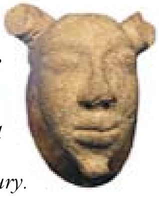
★ Kubera
A rare example of a Hindu god shown as a 2nd-century Kushana (see pp46–7) *grandee with marked Central Asian features is among a large collection of Mathura Art.*

THE SERINDIAN COLLECTION



Silk painting, 7th–8th century

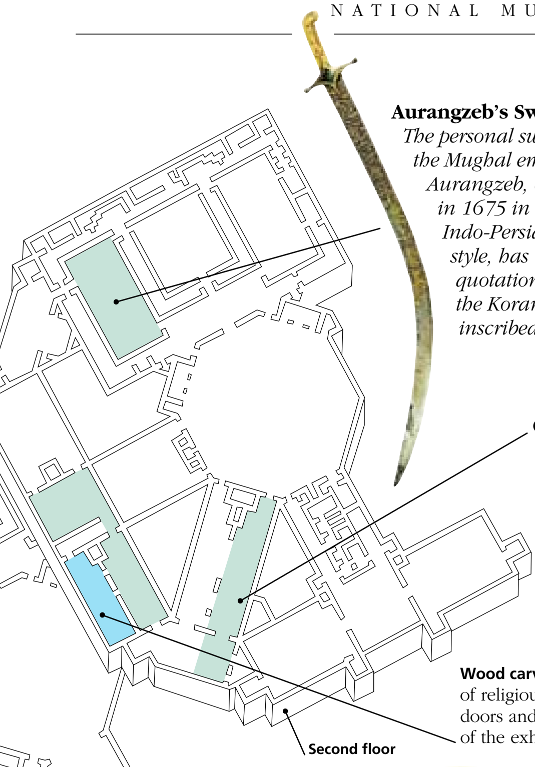
Almost 700 years after the Silk Route fell into disuse, Sir Aurel Stein, a British archaeologist, led a series of expeditions (1900–16) to uncover its treasures. On view at the National Museum, Stein's Central Asian collection of the artifacts he found in the Taklamakan Desert has silk paintings, Buddhist manuscripts and valuable records of life along this ancient trade route.



Terracotta Mask
This unusual human mask made of terracotta dates back to 2700 BC, and was unearthed in Mohenjodaro in the early 20th century.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Janpath. **Tel** *(011) 2301 9272.* ○ *10am–5pm Tue–Sun.* ● *Mon & public hols.* ✋ 📷 *extra charges.* ♿ 🎧 *11:30am, 2:30pm, 4pm.* 🛍 🖥 🚻 ⇅ ***Film shows, lectures, presentations and special exhibitions.***

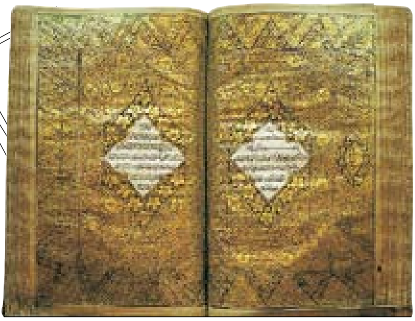


Aurangzeb's Sword
The personal sword of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, crafted in 1675 in the Indo-Persian style, has quotations from the Koran inscribed on it.

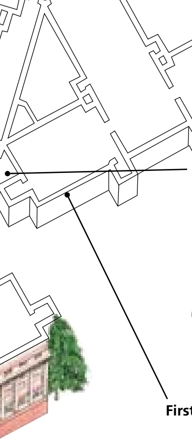
Gold Brocade
This 19th-century silk wedding sari woven in Varanasi is embellished with motifs in gold thread.

Wood carvings in the form of religious statues, carved doors and lintels are some of the exhibits here.

Second floor



★ Illuminated Koran
A superb example of the elegant Islamic art of calligraphy, this gilded 18th-century Koran is one of a collection that also has a 8th-century Koran in the ancient Kufic script. The latter is among the oldest of its kind in the world.



KEY TO FLOORPLAN

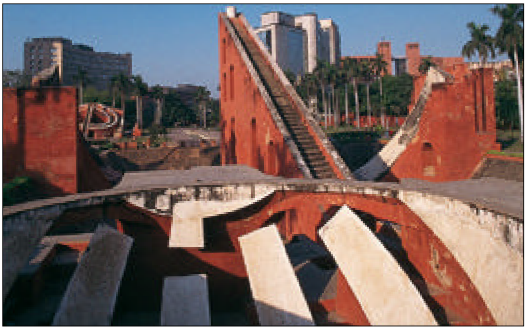
- 🟧 Indus Valley Culture
- 🟨 Ancient and Medieval Sculpture
- 🟥 Chola Bronzes
- 🟦 Buddhist Art
- 🟦 Indian Miniatures
- 🟪 Decorative Arts
- 🟫 Manuscripts and Wall Paintings
- 🟩 Central Asian Antiquities
- 🟩 Textiles, Arms and Armour, Musical Instruments
- 🟧 Coins and Indian Scripts
- 🟥 Jewellery
- 🟦 Wood carvings

GALLERY GUIDE

The collection is displayed on three floors, grouped according to theme, epoch and style. The central foyer itself has a display of sculptures from various parts of the country. The museum also has a library and auditorium where film shows and lectures are regularly held. Information on these is published in the newspapers. Information regarding catalogues and souvenirs can be had at the ticket office in the foyer. The display is changed from time to time for variety, and special exhibitions are also mounted.

STAR EXHIBITS

- ★ Dara Shikoh's Marriage Procession
- ★ Nataraja
- ★ Kubera
- ★ Illuminated Koran



The brick and plaster astronomical instruments in Jantar Mantar

Jantar Mantar ⑨

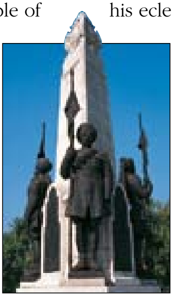
Sansad Marg. ○ *daily.* ▨

Sawai Jai Singh II of Jaipur, a keen astronomer, built this observatory in 1724 because he wanted to calculate planetary positions and alignments accurately, in order to perform sacred rituals and *pujas* at propitious moments. One of the five observatories he built *(see pp358–9)*, Jantar Mantar's instruments are large and fixed, making them resistant to vibration and therefore exact. The Samrat Yantra, a right-angled triangle whose hypotenuse is parallel to the earth's axis, is a gigantic sundial, with two brick quadrants on either side of it to measure the sun's shadow. The Ram Yantra, reads the altitude of the sun, and the Jai Prakash Yantra (invented by Jai Singh II himself) verifies the time of the spring equinox. Now obsolete, the observatory lies in the centre of a pleasant park surrounded by high-rises.

Lakshmi Narayan Mandir ⑩

Mandir Marg. ○ *daily.*

Built in 1938 by the industrialist BD Birla, this was one of the earliest Indian temples without caste restrictions, and Mahatma Gandhi attended its first *puja*. A fairly typical example of modern Indian temple architecture, with its marble entrance and ochre and maroon *shikharas* (spires), the Birla Mandir, as it is popularly known, has images of Vishnu and his consort Lakshmi in its main shrine. Subsidiary shrines set around the courtyard, are inscribed with verses from sacred Hindu texts and are decorated with paintings depicting scenes from the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*.



Teen Murti Memorial

Nehru Memorial Museum and Library ⑪

Teen Murti Marg. ***Tel*** *(011) 2301 4475.* ○ *Tue–Sun.* ● *public hols.* **Nehru Planetarium** ***Tel*** *(011) 2301 2944.* ▨ ***Shows*** *11:30am, 3pm.*

The residence of Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister, Teen Murti Bhavan was converted into a museum and library for research scholars after Nehru's death in 1964. This house has a special place in modern Indian history because it was also the home of two future prime ministers – Nehru's daughter Indira Gandhi and his grandson Rajiv Gandhi, both of whom were assassinated *(see p57)*. Nehru's bedroom and study, still exactly as he left them, reflect his austere yet elegant personality and his eclectic taste in books.

The extensive grounds are home to the **Nehru Planetarium** and the square, three-arched **Kushak Mahal**, a 14th-century hunting lodge built by Sultan Feroze Shah Tughluq *(see p87)*. On the roundabout in front of the house stands the **Teen Murti** ("Three Statues") **Memorial**. This is dedicated to the Indian soldiers who died in World War I. The house derives its name from this landmark.

Teen Murti Bhavan, Nehru's official residence, now the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library

Athpula, the 17th-century bridge near the entrance to Lodi Gardens on South End Road

Lodi Gardens ⑫

Entrance on Lodi Rd & South End Rd. ○ *daily.* 🍴

Lodi Gardens is one of Delhi's most picturesque parks, and a favourite haunt of joggers, yoga enthusiasts, political bigwigs accompanied by their bodyguards, and families who come to picnic on weekends. Landscaped at the behest of Lady Willingdon, the vicereine, in 1936, the park acts as a "green lung" for the people of Delhi. Its tree lined pathways and well-kept lawns and flowerbeds are laid out around the imposing 15th-century tombs of the Sayyid and Lodi dynasties, Delhi's last sultans. Many of them still have traces of the original turquoise tilework and calligraphy. The elegantly proportioned octagonal **Tomb of Muhammad Shah** (r.1434–44), the third ruler of the Sayyid dynasty, is said to be the oldest in the garden. The largest of the structures is the **Bara Gumbad** ("Big Dome") with an attached mosque built in 1494, and a guesthouse. At the South End Road entrance to the gardens is a lovely stone bridge called **Athpula** (literally "eight piers"), said to date from the 17th century. To its west are ramparts that enclose the **Tomb of Sikander Lodi** (r.1489–1517).

Purana Qila ⑬

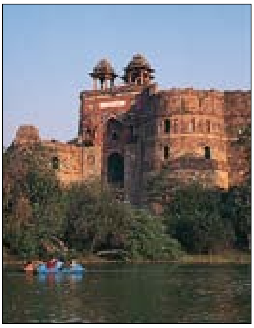
Mathura Rd. ***Tel*** *(011) 2435 4260.* ○ *sunrise–sunset daily.* **Museum *Tel*** *(011) 2435 5387.* ○ *10am–5pm.* ● *Friday.* ✋ ***Tickets:*** *from site and the Delhi Tourism office.* ***Tel*** *(011) 3320 005.*

Purana Qila, literally "Old Fort", stands on an ancient site that has been continuously occupied since 1000 BC, as archaeological excavations have revealed. The brooding ramparts of the fort now enclose the remains of the sixth city of Delhi, Dinpanah *(see p91)*, which was begun by the second Mughal emperor, Humayun. His reign, however, was short and in 1540 he was overthrown by the Afghan chieftain Sher Shah Sur *(see p49)*. Sher Shah added several new structures and renamed the citadel Shergarh ("Lion's Fort"). After Sher Shah's death Humayun regained his throne. Of the many palaces, barracks and other edifices built by these two rulers, only Sher Shah's mosque and a building that was probably Humayun's library remain standing today.

The **Qila-i-Kuhna Mosque**, built in 1541, is a superbly proportioned structure with fine decorative inlay work in red and white marble and slate. To the south of the mosque is Humayun's library, known as **Sher Mandal**. A double-storeyed octagonal tower of red sandstone, it is crowned by an elaborate *chhatri* (open pavilion) supported by eight pillars. This was the tragic spot where the devout emperor, hurrying to kneel on the steps for the evening prayer, missed his footing and tumbled to his death in January 1556.

***Chhatri* with decorative tilework**

The ramparts of the Purana Qila have three principal gateways, of which the imposing red sandstone **Bara Darwaza** on the western wall is the main entrance. Humayun's Tomb *(see p83)* can be seen from the southern gate.



Bara Darwaza, Purana Qila

Crafts Museum ⑭

Wooden doll on toy swing

Sarota, a 19th-century betel nut cracker from South India

For centuries, Indian craftsmen such as potters, weavers, masons and carvers, have created a range of objects for everyday use that are both beautiful and practical. A unique project was started in 1956 to promote indigenous artisans by giving them a place to display their work, and by the early 1980s, over 20,000 objects had been collected. This was the core around which India's first Crafts Museum developed.

★ Bandhini Odhni

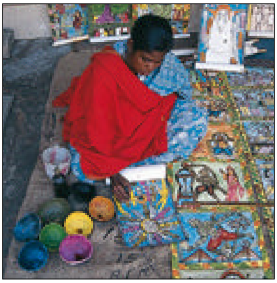
This exquisite veil is the work of the Bhansali tribe in Kutch, Gujarat. Tie-and-dye (bandhini) *is done by tying threads around grains to form a pattern, and dyeing the cloth in different colours.*

Mukhalinga

This rare, late 19th-century phallic image (linga) *with a human face* (mukha) *is made of brass and silver. The third eye and tiny snake-earrings are symbols of Shiva.*

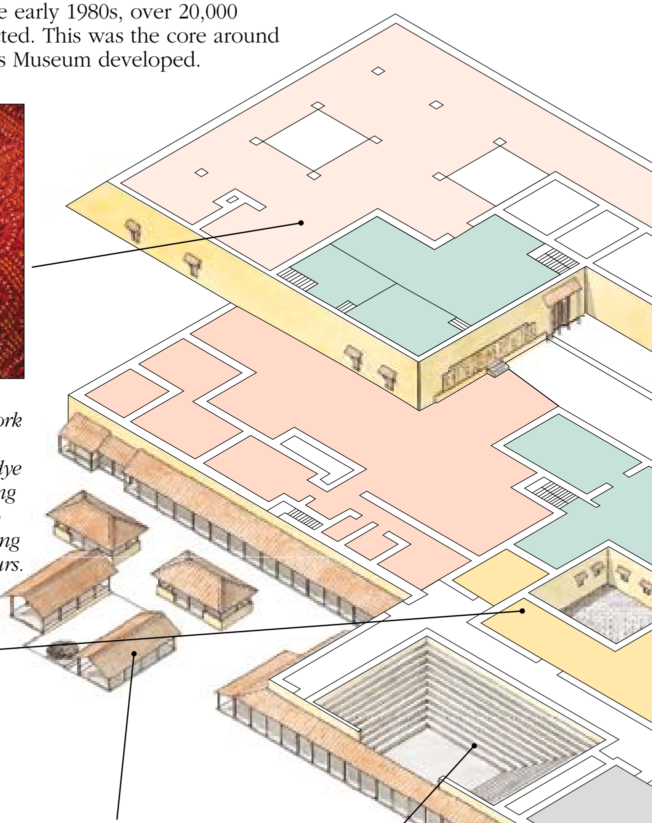
STAR EXHIBITS

- ★ Bandhini Odhni
- ★ Charraku
- ★ Bhuta Figure



Crafts Demonstration Area

Artisans from all over India set up workshops each month (barring the monsoon) to display their skills to visitors.



KEY

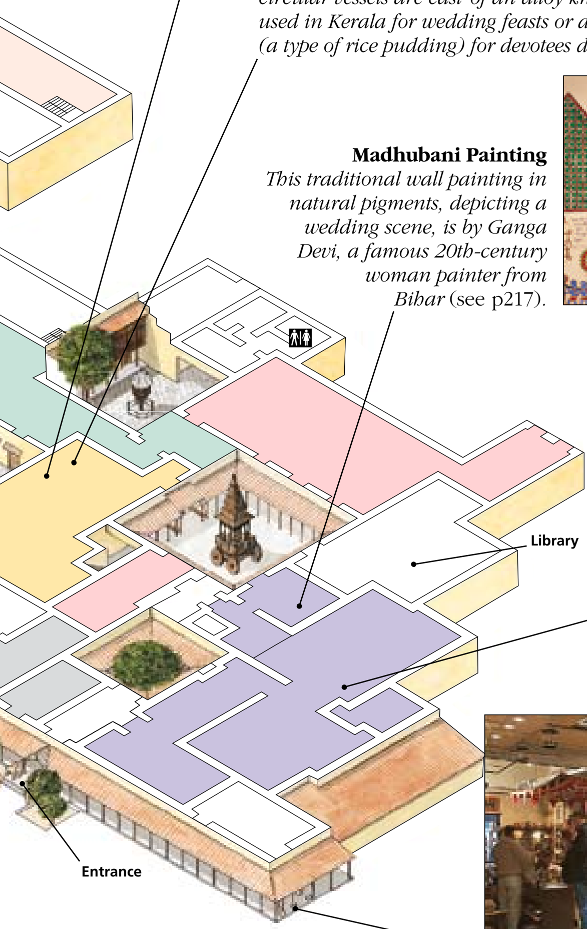
- ■ Gallery of Aristocratic Arts
- ■ Gallery of Ritual Arts
- ■ Gallery of Folk and Tribal Cultures
- ■ Gallery of Textiles
- ■ Non-exhibition space
- ■ Temporary exhibitions gallery
- ■ Visual store

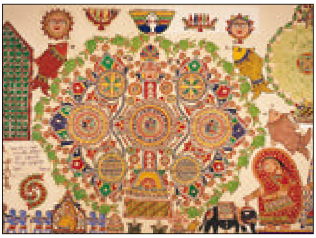
Yashoda and Krishna
This mid-20th-century plaster cast statuette from South India is an interesting example of popular kitsch, inspired by gods and mythology. It is cheap and easy to reproduce for use in a domestic shrine.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

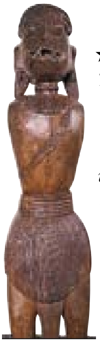
Bhairon Marg. ***Tel*** *(011) 2337 8876.* ○ *Tue–Sun.* ● *public hols.*
Crafts demonstration ○ *Oct–Jun: daily.*

★ Charraku
These enormous, circular vessels are cast of an alloy known as bell metal. They are still used in Kerala for wedding feasts or at temples for making payasam *(a type of rice pudding) for devotees during festivals.*





Madhubani Painting
This traditional wall painting in natural pigments, depicting a wedding scene, is by Ganga Devi, a famous 20th-century woman painter from Bihar (see p217).



★ Bhuta Figure
These life-sized wooden figures, artifacts from the Bhuta cult of spirit worship in the southern state of Karnataka (see p526), *date back to the early 19th-century.*

GALLERY GUIDE

The museum's exhibits are spread over two floors of the complex, divided into separate areas by courtyards that also double up as exhibition spaces. A large open area is used for live art displays by visiting artisans each month, except during the rainy season.

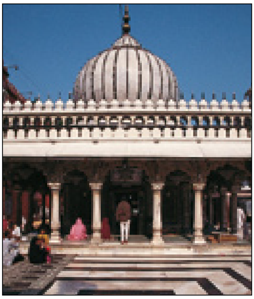
The Crafts Museum Shop
This shop sells a fine selection of items made by indigenous artisans, including household objects, decorative pieces and textiles.

Nizamuddin Complex ⑮

W of Mathura Rd. **Dargah** ○ *daily.*
Qawwali performance *7pm Thu.*
Urs (Jul & Dec).

This medieval settlement, or *basti,* is named after Sheikh Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya, whose grave and hospice are located here. Nizamuddin belonged to a fraternity of Sufi mystics, the Chishtis, respected for their austerity, piety and disdain for material desires, and was a spiritual descendant of Moinuddin Chishti *(see p376).* His daily assemblies drew both the rich and the poor, who believed that he was a "friend of God" who would intercede on their behalf on Judgement Day. He died in 1325 but his disciples call him a *zinda pir* (living spirit) who continues to heed their pleas. A three-day Urs is observed, with qawwalis sung, on the anniversary of his death, and another on the death of his disciple Amir Khusrau.

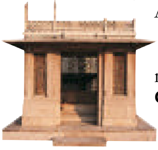
Colourful stalls in the alley leading to Nizamuddin's tomb



Congregational area, Nizamuddin

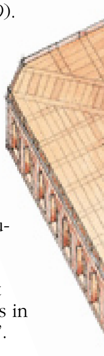
A winding alley leads to the saint's grave. It is crowded with mendicants and lined with stalls selling flowers and *chadors* (ceremonial cloths), polychrome clocks and prints of Mecca. The main congregational area is a marble pavilion (rebuilt in 1562) where, every Thursday evening, followers sing devotional songs composed by the celebrated Persian poet, Amir Khusrau (1253–1325). Women are denied entry beyond the outer verandah but may peer through *jalis* into the small, dark chamber where the saint's grave lies draped with a rose petal strewn cloth, surrounded by imams who continuously recite verses from the Koran. Amir Khusrau is buried in the complex, as are other eminent disciples, such as Jahanara Begum.

Across the western side of the open courtyard is the red sandstone Jama't Khana Mosque, built in 1325. To its north is a *baoli* (stepwell), excavated in secret while Tughluqabad *(see p95)* was being built, because Ghiyasuddin Tughluq had banned all building activities elsewhere. Legend has it that labourers worked here at night with the help of lamps lit not with oil but with water blessed by Nasiruddin, Nizamuddin's successor. The early 16th-century **Tomb of Atgah Khan** is to the north. A powerful minister in Emperor Akbar's court, he was murdered by Adham Khan, a political rival *(see p93).* The open marble pavilion, **Chaunsath Khamba** ("64 pillars"), is close by and just outside is an enclosure containing the simple grave of Mirza Ghalib (1786–1869). One of the greatest poets of his time, Ghalib wrote in both Urdu and Persian, and his verses are still recited. Nearby is the **Ghalib Academy**, a repository of paintings and manuscripts.



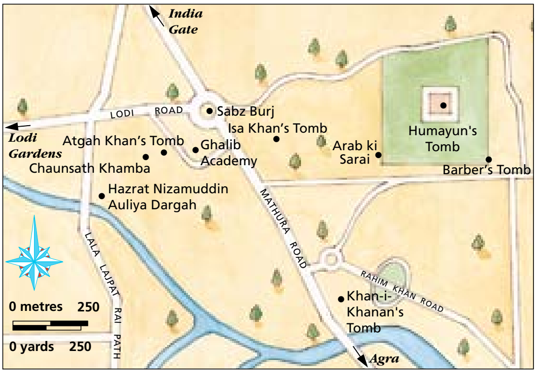
Tomb of the famous poet Mirza Ghalib

Despite its crowds, the *basti* preserves with miraculous serenity the legend of Nizamuddin, described by Khusrau as "a king without throne or crown, with kings in need of the dust of his feet".



NIZAMUDDIN COMPLEX

One of Delhi's historic necropolises, many of the saint's disciples, such as Amir Khusrau and Jahanara Begum, Shah Jahan's favourite daughter, are buried close to their master. Jahanara's epitaph echoes her master's teachings: "Let naught cover my grave save the green grass, for grass well suffices as a covering for the grave of the lowly".



Humayun's Tomb ⑯

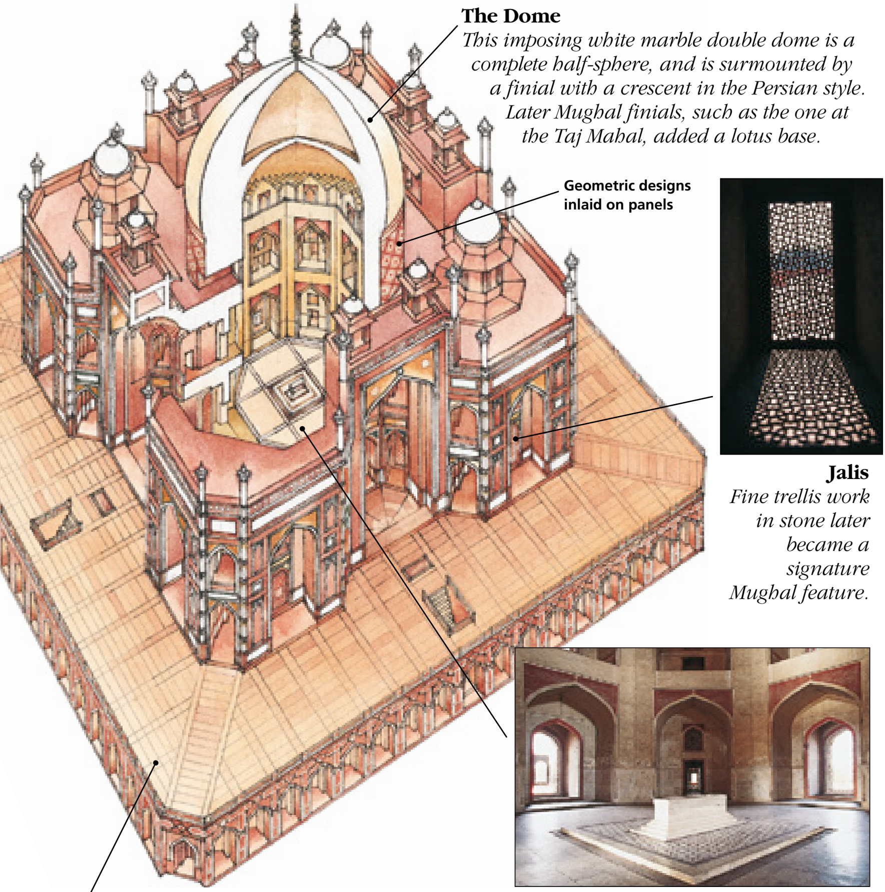
Marble star inlaid on panel

Humayun, the second Mughal emperor *(see p79)*, is buried in this tomb, the first great example of a Mughal garden tomb, and inspiration for several later monuments, such as the incomparable Taj Mahal *(see pp172–3)*. Built in 1565 by Persian architect Mirak Mirza Ghiyas, it was commissioned by Humayun's senior widow, Haji Begum. Often called "a dormitory of the House of Timur", the graves in its chambers include Humayun's wives and Dara Shikoh, Shah Jahan's scholarly son. Also in the complex are the octagonal tomb and mosque of Isa Khan, a 16th-century nobleman, and the tomb of Humayun's favourite barber. The Arab ki Sarai was a rest house for the Persian masons who built the tomb.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Off Mathura Rd, Bharat Scout Guide Marg. ***Tel*** *(011) 2461 9861.* ○ *daily.* 📷 ☕ 🚻 ♿

The perfectly symmetrical Humayun's Tomb as seen from the entrance



The Dome

This imposing white marble double dome is a complete half-sphere, and is surmounted by a finial with a crescent in the Persian style. Later Mughal finials, such as the one at the Taj Mahal, added a lotus base.

Geometric designs inlaid on panels

Jalis

Fine trellis work in stone later became a signature Mughal feature.

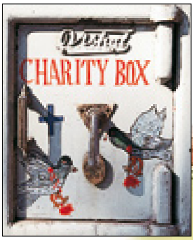
The imposing plinth is decorated with red sandstone arches and consists of multiple chambers, a departure from the single chamber of previous tombs.

The Tomb Chamber

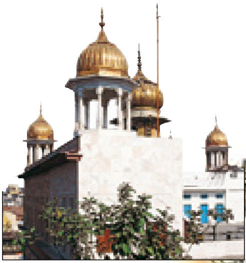
The plain white marble sarcophagus stands on a simple black and white marble platform. The grave itself, no longer accessible, lies in the dark, bat-filled basement below.

Street-by-Street: Chandni Chowk ⑰

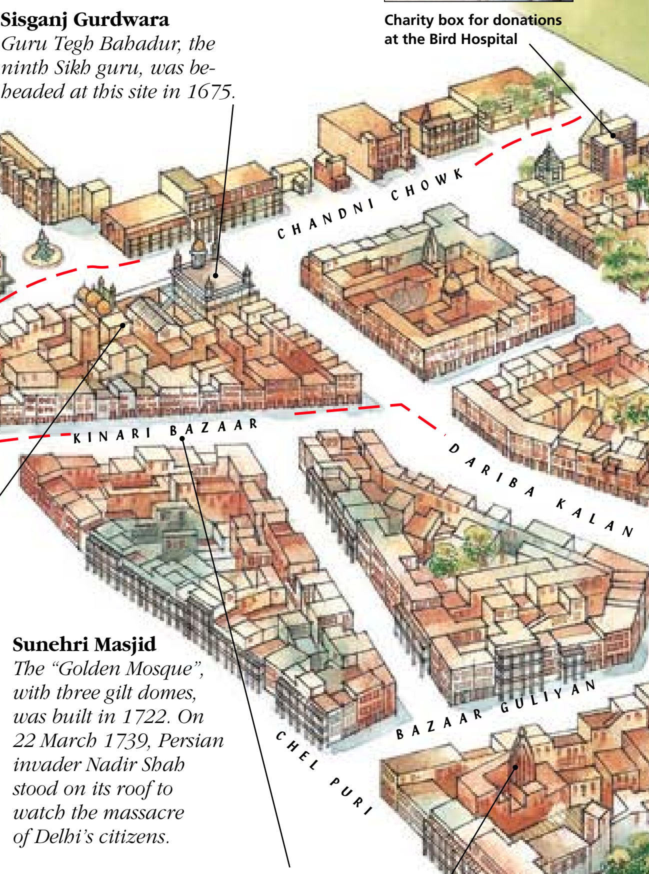
Once Shahjahanabad's *(see p91)* most elegant boulevard, Chandni Chowk ("Silvery, Moonlit Square"), laid out in 1648, had a canal running through it, and was lined with grand shops and mansions. Today, it is still the heart of Old Delhi, where religious and commercial activity mix easily. At the entrance to Chandni Chowk is the Digambar Jain Temple, the first of many shrines along its length. Built in 1656, it also houses a unique hospital for birds.



Charity box for donations at the Bird Hospital

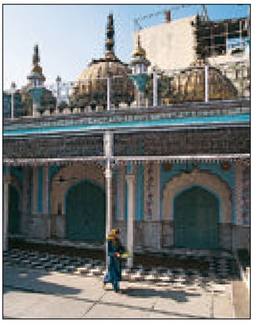


Sisganj Gurdwara
Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Sikh guru, was beheaded at this site in 1675.



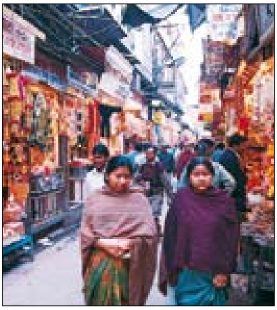
Fatehpuri Masjid (built in 1650)

Nai Sarak



Sunehri Masjid
The "Golden Mosque", with three gilt domes, was built in 1722. On 22 March 1739, Persian invader Nadir Shah stood on its roof to watch the massacre of Delhi's citizens.

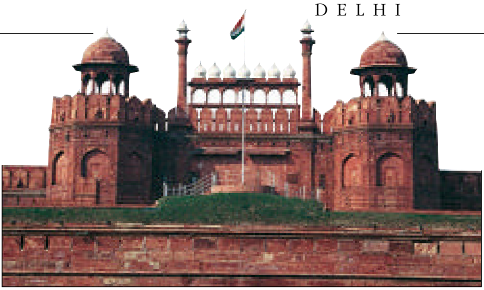
Shiv Temple

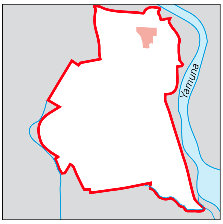


★ Kinari Bazaar
Tightly packed stalls sell all manner of glittering gold and silver trimmings such as braids, tinsel garlands and turbans for weddings and festivals.

STAR SIGHTS

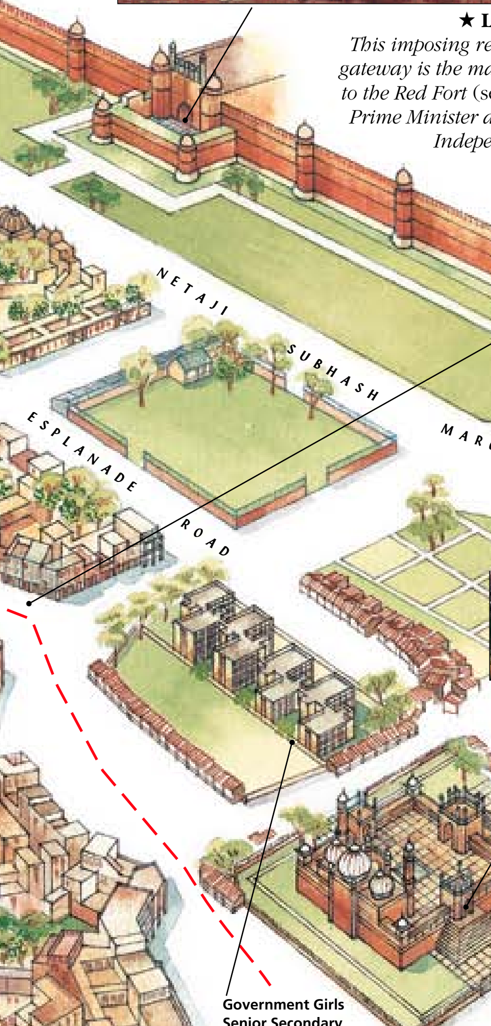
- ★ Kinari Bazaar
- ★ Lahore Gate
- ★ Dariba Kalan
- ★ Jami Masjid

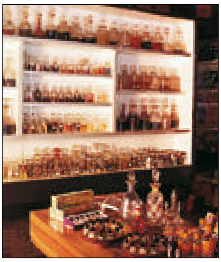




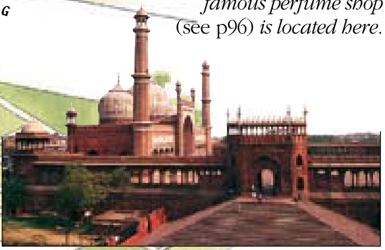
★ Lahore Gate
This imposing red sandstone gateway is the main entrance to the Red Fort (see p86). *The Prime Minister addresses the Independence Day rally here.*

LOCATOR MAP
See Delhi Map pp70–71

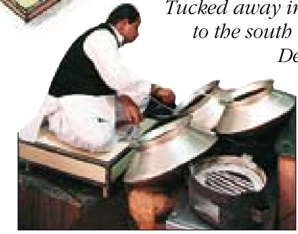

NETAJI SUBHASH MARG
ESPLANADE ROAD
Government Girls Senior Secondary School
Karim's



★ Dariba Kalan
Gold and silver ornaments are sold along this lane. Gulab Singh's famous perfume shop (see p96) *is located here.*



★ Jami Masjid
India's largest mosque, Jami Masjid, with its soaring minarets and vast marble domes, is grandly positioned on top of a mound (see p86).



Karim's
Tucked away in a narrow lane to the south of Jami Masjid is Delhi's most authentic Mughlai eatery (see p720). *Named after a legendary 19th-century chef, the restaurant is now run by his descendants.*

0 metres 25
0 yards 25

KEY

- - - Suggested route

The sandstone and marble Jami Masjid, India's largest mosque

Jami Masjid ⑱

Off Netaji Subhash Marg. ● *for non-Muslims during prayer time and after 5pm.* 📷 *extra charges.*

This grand mosque, with three imposing black and white marble domes, and twin minarets framing its great central arch, was built in 1656 by the Emperor Shah Jahan, on a natural mound. It took six years and 5,000 workers to construct, at a cost of nearly a million rupees. A magnificent flight of sandstone steps leads to the great arched entrances. In Aurangzeb's time, the area attracted horse sellers and jugglers; today, shoe minders and beggars mill around. The huge 28-m (92-ft) square courtyard can accommodate up to 20,000 people at Friday prayer sessions and at Id, when it looks like a sea of worshippers. Next to the *dukka* (water tank) for the ritual ablutions, is the platform where, before loudspeakers took over, a second prayer leader echoed the imam's words and actions for worshippers too far from the pulpit for a clear view.

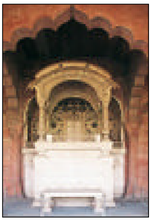
Red Fort ⑲

Chandni Chowk. ***Tel*** *(011) 2327 7705.* ○ *Tue–Sun.* ● *public hols.* 🎟 **Son et Lumière** *Sep–Oct & Feb–Apr: 8:30–9:30pm daily; Nov–Jan: 7:30–8:30pm daily; May–Aug: 9–10pm daily.* 🎟 **Museum** ○ *Tue–Sun.* 🛍

Red sandstone battlements give this imperial citadel its name, Lal ("Red") Qila ("Fort"). Commissioned by Shah Jahan in 1639, it took nine years to build and was the seat of Mughal power until 1857 when the last Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar, was dethroned and exiled. Today, the Red Fort remains a powerful symbol of Indian nationhood. It was here that the national flag was hoisted for the first time when India became an independent nation on 15 August 1947.

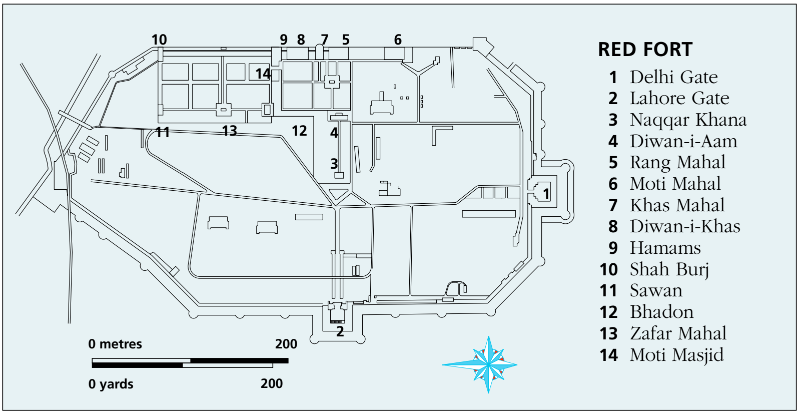
Entry is through **Lahore Gate**. One of the fort's six gateways, this leads on to the covered bazaar of **Chatta Chowk**, where jewels and brocades were once sold. Beyond this lies the **Naqqar Khana**, a pavilion where ceremonial music was played three times a day.

A path from here leads to the **Diwan-i-Aam**, a 60-pillared, red sandstone hall where the emperor gave daily audience to the public. The emperor sat beneath the lavishly carved stone canopy, while the low bench in front of it was for his chief minister. Beyond this hall is the **Rang Mahal**. Inside its gilded chambers, once exclusively for women, is an inlaid marble fountain shaped like an open lotus.



The throne canopy at the Diwan-i-Aam

Nearby, is the **Khas Mahal**, the emperor's royal apartments with special rooms for private worship and for sleeping. The Robe Room ("Tosh Khana") has a superb marble *jali* screen carved with the scales of justice, a motif seen in many miniature paintings. North of the Khas Mahal is the **Diwan-i-Khas**, built completely of white marble. The legendary Peacock Throne, embedded



with priceless jewels was kept here until it was taken away as war booty by the Persian chieftain Nadir Shah in 1739. The walls and pillars of this exclusive pavilion, where the emperor met his most trusted nobles, were once inlaid with gems. The ceiling was of silver inlaid with precious stones.

A little further away are the **Hamams** (Royal Baths) with inlaid marble floors and three enclosures. The first chamber provided hot vapour, the second scented rosewater through sculpted fountains, and the third cold water.

To the west of the baths is the elegant little **Moti Masjid** ("Pearl Mosque"), named after the pearly sheen of its marble. It was built by Emperor Aurangzeb in 1659.

Gandhi's *samadhi* at Rajghat

Rajghat ⑳

Mahatma Gandhi Rd. ○ *daily.* **Prayer meetings** *5pm Fri.* **Gandhi National Museum** ***Tel*** *(011) 2332 8310.* ○ *Tue–Sun.* ● *public hols.* **Film shows** *4–5pm Sat & Sun.*

India's most potent symbol of nationhood, Rajghat is the site of Mahatma Gandhi's cremation. A sombre, black granite platform inscribed with his last words, *He Ram!* ("Oh God") now stands here. The only splash of colour comes from the garlands of orange marigolds that are draped over the platform. All visiting heads of state are taken to this *samadhi* (memorial) to lay wreaths in memory of the "Father of the Nation". On Gandhi's birthday (2 Oct) and death anniversary (30 Jan), the nation's leaders gather here for prayer meetings.

The Ashokan Pillar, rising above the ruins of Feroze Shah Kotla

Just across the road is the **Gandhi National Museum**, crammed with memorabilia, including Gandhi's letters and diaries. A framed plaque on the wall sets out his simple philosophy: "Non-violence is the pitting of one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant… it is then possible for a single individual to defy the might of an unjust empire".

Feroze Shah Kotla ㉑

Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg. ○ *daily.*

Only some ramparts and ruined structures remain of Feroze Shah Kotla, the palace complex of Ferozabad, Delhi's fifth city *(see p91)*, erected by that indefatigable builder Feroze Shah Tughluq. Entry is from the gate next to the Indian Express Building. At one end of the walled enclosure stand the roofless ruins of the Jami Masjid, of which only the rear wall is still extant. This was once Delhi's largest mosque and according to popular legend, Timur, the Mongol conqueror from Samarkand who sacked Delhi in 1398, came here to say his Friday prayers.

Next to the mosque are the remains of a pyramidal structure, topped by one of the Mauryan emperor Ashoka's polished stone pillars *(see p42)*. Brought from the Punjab, it was installed here in 1356 by Feroze Shah. It was from the inscriptions on this pillar that James Prinsep, the Oriental linguist, deciphered the Brahmi script, a forerunner of the modern Devanagari, in 1837.

Khuni Darwaza (the "Bloodstained Gate"), opposite the Express Building, was built by Sher Shah Sur as one of the gates to his city *(see p79)*. This was where the Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar's sons were shot by Lieutenant Hodson after the Mutiny of 1857 was quashed *(see p53)*.

THE BAZAARS OF OLD DELHI

Old Delhi's bazaars are legendary. An English visitor over a 100 years ago, wrote in praise of the "Cashmere shawls, gold and silver embroidery, jewellery, enamels and carpets" found here. Today the great wholesale bazaars of Chandni Chowk still retain a souk-like quality. Their narrow streets are lined with shops, whose goods spill out onto the pavements. Each lane specializes in a commodity: Dariba Kalan, for instance, is the lane of jewellers and silversmiths, while Kinari Bazaar *(see p84)* sells a bewildering array of tinsel and sequins.

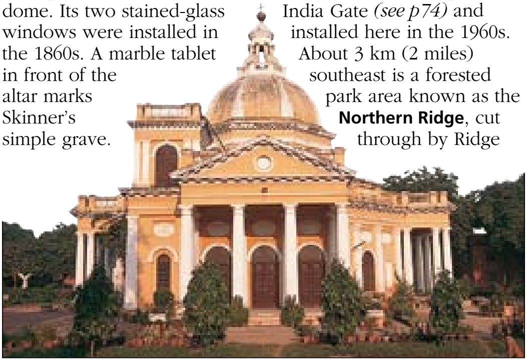
Indian spices on sale in Khari Baoli, Asia's largest spice market

Around Kashmiri Gate ㉒

Between Nicholson Rd, Ramlal Chandok Marg & Church Rd.
St James's Church Lothian Rd.
Tel *(011) 2386 0873.* ○ *daily.*
✝ *English: 9am Sun.*

This landmark, from where the Mughals would set off to spend their summers in Kashmir, resonates with memories of the Mutiny of 1857 *(see p53)*. The short stretch between Kashmiri Gate and the Old Delhi General Post Office (GPO) witnessed bitter fighting, as the city of Delhi lay under siege by the British. A final assault led to the blasting of the Gate, and a plaque on its western side honours "the engineers and miners who died while clearing the gate for British forces on September 14, 1857". In the 1920s, this area was also a favourite haunt of the British residents living in nearby Civil Lines.

The historic **St James's Church**, Delhi's oldest, is the most striking sight in the vicinity. It was consecrated in 1836 by Colonel James Skinner. A flamboyant adventurer of mixed parentage who was rejected by the British Army, Skinner raised his own cavalry regiment which proceeded to fight with great distinction. The church was erected in fulfillment of a vow Skinner made on the battlefield. An unusual structure, the church is in the shape of a Greek cross, surmounted by an imposing eight-leafed dome. Its two stained-glass windows were installed in the 1860s. A marble tablet in front of the altar marks Skinner's simple grave.



The impressive yellow and white edifice of St James's Church

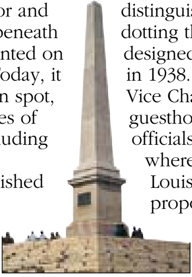
Statues of former viceroys around the Coronation Memorial

Coronation Memorial ㉓

S of NH1 Bypass. ○ *daily.*

The Royal Durbar, held in 1911 to proclaim the accession of George V as King Emperor of India, was held at this site. A red sandstone obelisk commemorates the coronation. More than 100,000 people thronged to see the King Emperor and Queen Empress sit beneath a golden dome mounted on a crimson canopy. Today, it is a dusty and forlorn spot, surrounded by statues of former viceroys, including Lords Hardinge and Willingdon (distinguished for their role in the construction of New Delhi). Towering over them all is the 22-m (72-ft) high statue of the King Emperor himself, which was removed from the Statue Canopy at India Gate *(see p74)* and installed here in the 1960s. About 3 km (2 miles) southeast is a forested park area known as the **Northern Ridge**, cut through by Ridge Road and Rani Jhansi Road. At its southern end lies the **Mutiny Memorial** (known locally as Ajitgarh), a Victorian Gothic tower which commemorates the soldiers "both British and native… who were killed" in 1857. Panoramic views of Old Delhi can be enjoyed from here.

Running parallel to the Northern Ridge is the sprawling **Delhi University** area. St Stephen's College, the most distinguished of the colleges dotting the campus, was designed by Walter George in 1938. The office of the Vice Chancellor, once the guesthouse for British officials, is also the spot where the young Lord Louis Mountbatten proposed to Edwina Ashley in 1922. A plaque celebrates the event. They eventually became India's last viceroy and vicereine.



Coronation Memorial

The Ridge ㉔

Upper Ridge Rd. ○ *daily.* **Buddha Jayanti Park** ○ *daily.*

Delhi's ridge, the last outcrop of the Aravalli Hills extending northwards from Rajasthan, runs diagonally across the city from southwest to northeast. The area was originally developed by Feroze Shah Tughluq in the late 14th century as his hunting resort. The ruins of his many lodges can still be seen here. This green belt of undulating, rocky terrain is covered by dense scrub forest consisting mainly of laburnum *(Cassia fistula)*, kikar *(Acacia arabica)* and flame of the forest *(Butea monosperma)*, interspersed with bright splashes of bougainvillea.

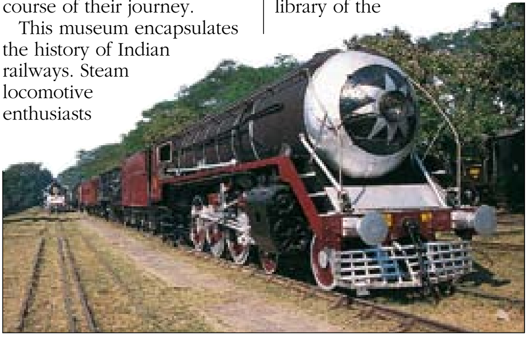
A large area in the centre is now the **Buddha Jayanti Park**, a peaceful, well-manicured enclave, with paved paths. Pipal *(Ficus religiosa)* trees abound, and on a small ornamental island is a simple sandstone pavilion shading the large gilt-covered statue of the Buddha, installed by the 14th Dalai Lama in 1993. An inscription nearby quotes the Dalai Lama: "Human beings have the capacity to bequeathe to future generations a world that is truly human". Every year in May, Buddhist devotees celebrate Buddha Jayanti here *(see p35)*.

The National Rail Museum ㉕

Chanakyapuri. ***Tel*** *(011) 2688 0804.* ○ *Tue–Sun.* ● *public hols.* 🎟 *extra for train rides.* 🛍

India's railway network can boast some astonishing statistics. It has a route length of 63,360 km (39,370 miles) and tracks that cover 108,513 km (67,427 miles). There are about 7,150 stations, 12,600 passenger trains, and 1,350 goods trains that run every day. The railways employ 1.6 million people, while 13 million passengers travel by train each day, consuming 6 million meals through the course of their journey.

This museum encapsulates the history of Indian railways. Steam locomotive enthusiasts will appreciate the collection that traces the development of the Indian railways from 1853, when the first 34 km (21 miles) of railway between Bombay (now Mumbai) and Thane was laid. The wealth of memorabilia on display inside includes the skull of an elephant that collided with a mail train at Golkara in 1894, and a realistic model of an 1868 first-class passenger coach with separate compartments for accompanying servants. Outside, are several retired steam locomotives built in Manchester and Glasgow in the late 19th century, and the salon that carried the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII) on his travels during the 1876 Royal Durbar. A "toy train" offers rides around the compound, and the shop sells a range of model locomotives.


A late 19th-century steam engine at the National Rail Museum

Safdarjung's Tomb ㉖

Aurobindo Marg. ***Tel*** *(011) 2301 7293.* ○ *daily.* 🎟 📷 *extra charges for video photography.* ♿

This is the last of Delhi's garden tombs and was built in 1754 for Safdarjung, the powerful prime minister of Muhammad Shah, the Mughal emperor between 1719 and 1748. Marble was allegedly stripped from the tomb of Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan in Nizamuddin to construct this rather florid example of late Mughal architecture. Approached by an ornate gateway, the top storey of which houses the library of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), the tomb has an exaggerated dome and stands in a *charbagh*, a garden cut by water channels into four parts. Its façade is extensively ornamented with well-preserved plaster carving and the central chamber has some fine stone inlay work on the floor.

A well-stocked shop selling imported foodstuffs at INA Market

INA Market ㉗

Aurobindo Marg. **Shops** ○ *Tue–Sun.*

This lively bazaar retains all the trappings of a traditional Indian market but also sells imported foodstuffs such as cheese, pasta and exotic varieties of seafood. The stalls are crammed together under a ramshackle roof, mostly corrugated iron and oilcloth, and sell every manner of stainless steel utensils, spices, Punjabi pickles, readymade garments and even live chickens. Tiny restaurants in between offer Indian fast food. Diplomats, out-of-town shoppers and locals all patronize this market for its reasonable prices and wide variety of products.

The name is derived from Indian National Airports, as the adjacent colony used to house employees of the nearby Safdarjung Aerodrome. Built in the 1930s, the aerodrome was the headquarters of the South Eastern Command Air Wing during World War II. It now contains the offices of the Ministry of Civil Aviation and the Delhi Gliding Club. Indian Airlines also has a 24-hour booking office here *(see p773)*.

The double-storeyed *madrasa* (college) at Hauz Khas

Hauz Khas ㉘

W of Aurobindo Marg. **Monuments** ○ *daily.*

Beyond the boutiques, art galleries and restaurants that have taken over the village of Hauz Khas, are the medieval monuments from Feroze Shah Tughluq's reign. In 1352, the sultan erected a number of buildings on the banks of Hauz Khas, the large tank which was excavated by Alauddin Khilji for his city of Siri. The tank, which shares its name with the surrounding village, is now dry.

Contemporary accounts claim that Feroze Shah was a prolific builder, and during his 37-year reign he constructed an astounding 40 mosques, 200 towns, 100 public baths and about 30 reservoirs.

Among the buildings around Hauz Khas are a *madrasa*, Feroze Shah's tomb and the ruins of a small mosque. The *madrasa* is built close to the edge of the tank. Plaster carvings and niches for books can be seen inside. The *chhatris* (open pavilions) in the entrance forecourt are said to cover the teachers' burial mounds. At one end of the *madrasa* lies the austere tomb of Feroze Shah. Wine-red painted plaster calligraphy decorates its interior.

The complex is best viewed in the afternoon, when sunlight filters through the *jalis* to cover the graves of the sultan, his sons and grandson with delicate star-shaped shadows.

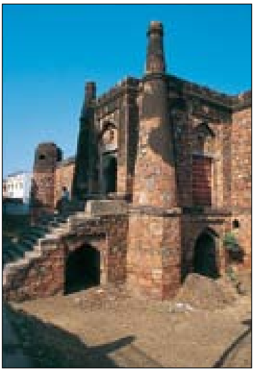
East of Hauz Khas, off Aurobindo Marg, is a small tapering structure called **Chor Minar** ("Tower of Thieves") dating back to the 14th-century Khilji period. Its walls, pockmarked with holes, are said to have held the severed heads of thieves, intended to deter others from crime.

Close by, to the northwest, is the **Nili Masjid** ("Blue Mosque"). Named after the blue tiles above its eaves, it was built in 1505 by a certain Kasumbhil, nurse to the governor of Delhi's son.

Khirkee ㉙

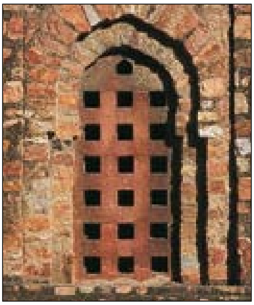
N of Press Enclave Marg. **Monuments** ○ *daily.*

The unusual two-storeyed Khirkee ("Windows") Mosque, built by Feroze Shah Tughluq's prime minister, Khan-i-Jahan Junan Shah, in the mid-14th century lends its name to this little village in South Delhi. The mosque has a fortress-like appearance, broken by rows of arched windows, which give the mosque its name. Its innovative design was not repeated again as its many pillared divisions were found impractical for large congregations.



The fortress-like Khirkee Mosque

Further down is **Satpula**, the seven-arched stone weir built by Muhammad bin Tughluq in 1326. It formed part of a reservoir used for irrigation, and also made up a portion of the fortified wall enclosing Jahanpanah.



An arched window with a carved stone *jali*, Khirkee Mosque

Jahanpanah ㉚

S of Panchsheel Park. **Monuments** ○ *daily.*

In the heart of Jahanpanah, Muhammad bin Tughluq's capital, stands **Begumpuri Mosque**, also built by Khan-i-Jahan Junan Shah. (Ask specifically for the old mosque, as a new one is located nearby.) The mosque is remarkable for its 44 domes which surmount the cloisters surrounding the central courtyard. It is said that in times of need, this mosque also functioned as a treasury, a granary and a general meeting place.

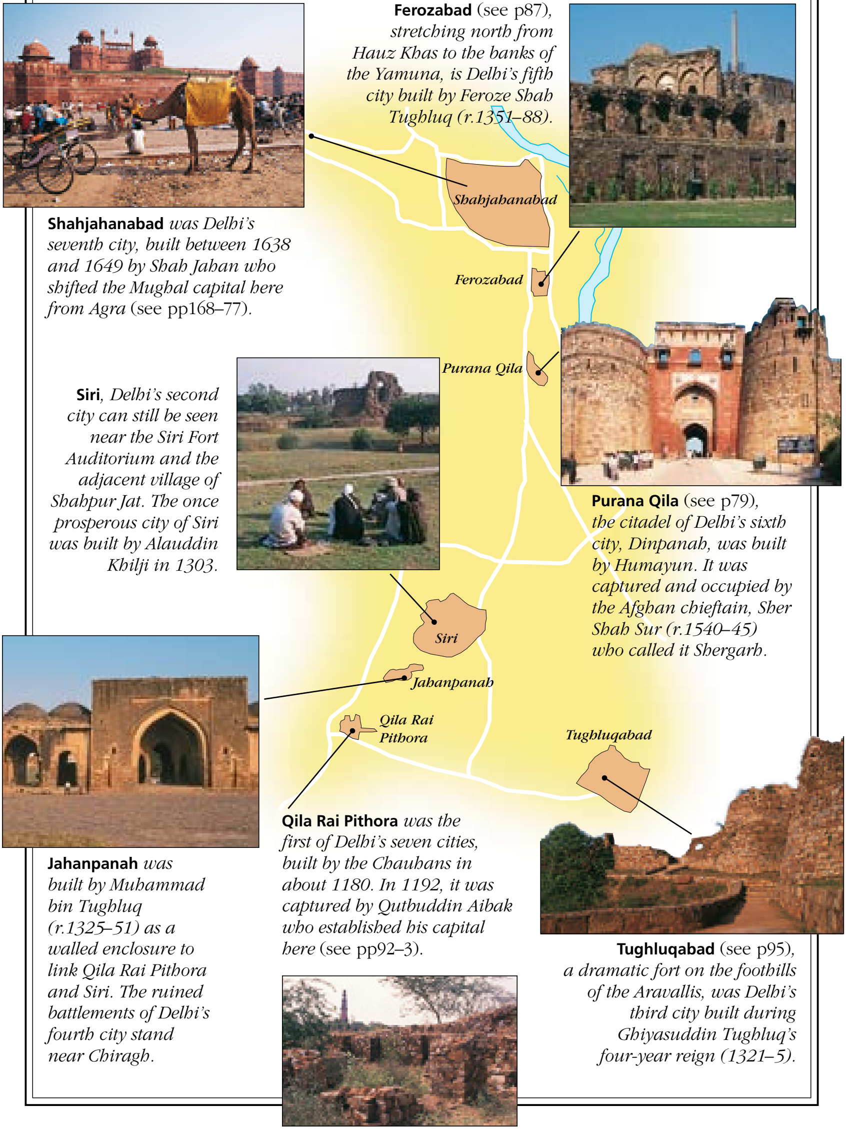
To the north is the palace of **Bijay Mandal**, from where, according to the 14th-century Arab traveller Ibn Batuta, Muhammad bin Tughluq reviewed his troops. The upper platform offers a grand view of Delhi, extending from the Qutb Minar to Humayun's Tomb and beyond.

Early Capitals of Delhi

Purana Qila

Delhi's famous "seven cities" range from the 12th-century Qila Rai Pithora, built by Prithviraj Chauhan, to the imperial Shahjahanabad, constructed by the Mughals in the 17th century. Each of these cities comprised the settlements that grew around the forts erected by powerful sultans with territorial ambitions.

As the Delhi Sultans consolidated their territories, they moved their defensively situated capitals in the rocky outcrops of the Aravallis, to the northeast, towards the open plains by the banks of the Yamuna. Today, Delhi is an amalgam of the ruins of medieval citadels, palaces, tombs and mosques, and an ever-expanding, modern concrete jungle.



Ferozabad (see p87), *stretching north from Hauz Khas to the banks of the Yamuna, is Delhi's fifth city built by Feroze Shah Tughluq (r.1351–88).*

Shahjahanabad *was Delhi's seventh city, built between 1638 and 1649 by Shah Jahan who shifted the Mughal capital here from Agra* (see pp168–77).

Siri, *Delhi's second city can still be seen near the Siri Fort Auditorium and the adjacent village of Shahpur Jat. The once prosperous city of Siri was built by Alauddin Khilji in 1303.*

Purana Qila (see p79), *the citadel of Delhi's sixth city, Dinpanah, was built by Humayun. It was captured and occupied by the Afghan chieftain, Sher Shah Sur (r.1540–45) who called it Shergarh.*

Jahanpanah *was built by Muhammad bin Tughluq (r.1325–51) as a walled enclosure to link Qila Rai Pithora and Siri. The ruined battlements of Delhi's fourth city stand near Chiragh.*

Qila Rai Pithora *was the first of Delhi's seven cities, built by the Chauhans in about 1180. In 1192, it was captured by Qutbuddin Aibak who established his capital here* (see pp92–3).

Tughluqabad (see p95), *a dramatic fort on the foothills of the Aravallis, was Delhi's third city built during Ghiyasuddin Tughluq's four-year reign (1321–5).*

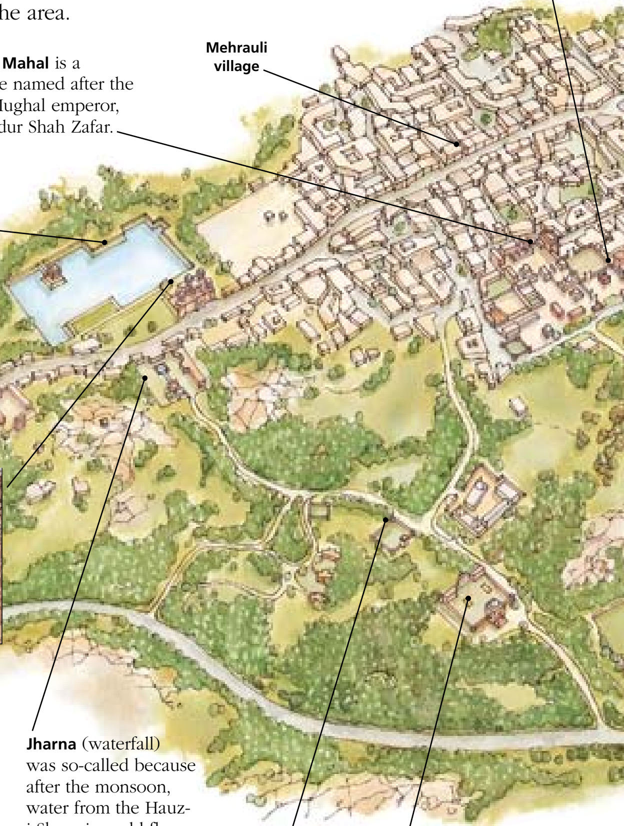
Mehrauli Archaeological Park ㉛

Chhatri outside Jamali-Kamali

Best known for the Qutb Minar, a UNESCO World Heritage Monument, Mehrauli was built over Rajput territories called Lal Kot and Qila Rai Pithora. In 1193, Qutbuddin Aibak, then a slave-general of Muhammad of Ghur *(see p48)*, made it the centre of the Delhi Sultanate. By the 13th century the small village, Mehrauli, had grown around the shrine of the Sufi saint, Qutb Sahib. Later, Mughal princes came here to hunt and some 19th-century British officials built weekend houses, attracted by the area's orchards, ponds and game. Many of Delhi's rich and famous now own sprawling retreats in the area.

Dargah Qutb Sahib

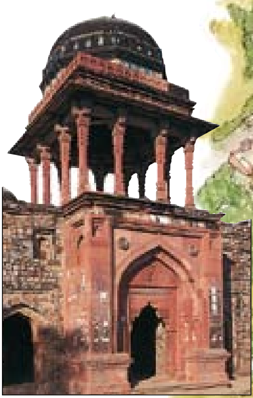
The 13th-century dargah *of Sufi saint Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar and the nearby Moti Masjid ("Pearl Mosque") attract many pilgrims.*



Hauz-i-Shamsi reservoir was built in 1230 by Sultan Iltutmish *(see p48)*, who is supposed to have been guided to this site by the Prophet in a dream.

Zafar Mahal is a palace named after the last Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar.

Mehrauli village

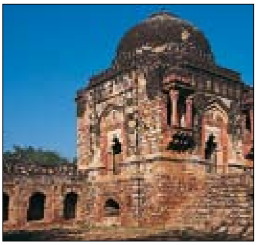


★ Jahaz Mahal

Venue of the Phoolwalon ki Sair (a colourful flower procession), this square pleasure pavilion, built during the Lodi era (1451–1526), seems to float on the Hauz-i-Shamsi tank.

Jharna (waterfall) was so-called because after the monsoon, water from the Hauz-i-Shamsi would flow over an embankment into a garden.

Bagichi Mosque



Madhi Masjid

Surrounded by bastions and a high wall, this fortress-like mosque, dating back to 1200, has a large open courtyard and a three-arched, heavily ornamented prayer hall.

STAR FEATURES

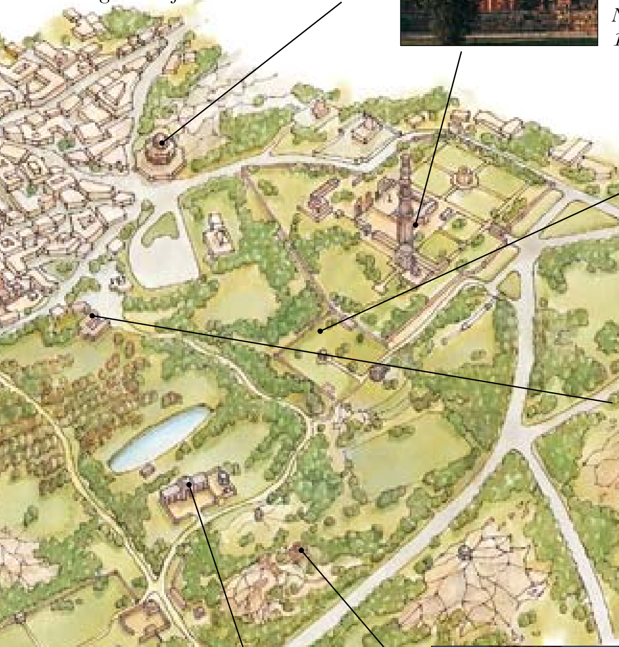
- ★ Jahaz Mahal
- ★ Qutb Minar
- ★ Jamali-Kamali Mosque and Tomb

Adham Khan's Tomb
The son of Emperor Akbar's wet nurse, Adham Khan murdered a political rival and was executed by the emperor for his crime. Akbar later built this large tomb for mother and son.

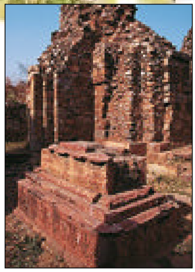
VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Delhi-Gurgaon Rd. ○ *daily.* ℹ *Conservation Assistant's Office, (011) 2664 3856.* 📷 🛍 🍴 🚻 🎉 *Phoolwalon ki Sair (early Oct).*

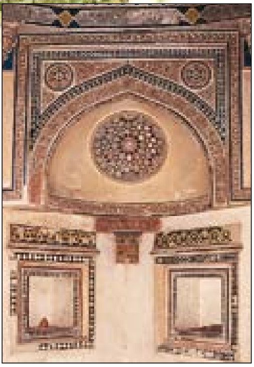
★ Qutb Minar
India's highest single tower, Qutb Minar (Arabic for pole or axis), marked the site of the first Muslim kingdom in North India, established in 1193 (see p94).



Rajon ki Baoli
This dramatic three-storeyed stepwell was also called Sukhi Baoli (dry well). Nearby is the five-storeyed Gandhak ki Baoli, named after its strong sulphur (gandhak) *smell. These* baolis *once supplied fresh water to the area.*



Balban's Tomb
The 13th-century tomb of Balban, Qutbuddin's successor, lies in a square rubble-built chamber.



★ Jamali-Kamali Mosque and Tomb
The tomb of Jamali (the court poet during the late Lodi and early Mughal age) is inscribed with some of his verses. Its well-preserved interior has coloured tiles and richly decorated painted plasterwork. The second grave is unidentified but is widely believed to be that of his brother, Kamali.

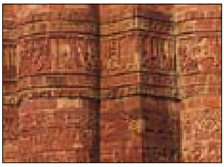
Mehrauli: The Qutb Complex

Floral motif

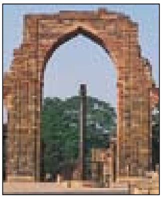
The Qutb Minar towers over this historic area where Qutbuddin Aibak laid the foundation of the Delhi Sultanate *(see p48)*. In 1193, he built the Quwwat-ul-Islam ("Might of Islam") Mosque and the Qutb Minar to announce the advent of the Muslim sultans. The mosque is a patchwork fusion of decorative Hindu panels, salvaged from razed temples around the site, and Islamic domes and arches. Later, Iltutmish, Alauddin Khilji and Feroze Shah Tughluq added more structures, heralding a new architectural style.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

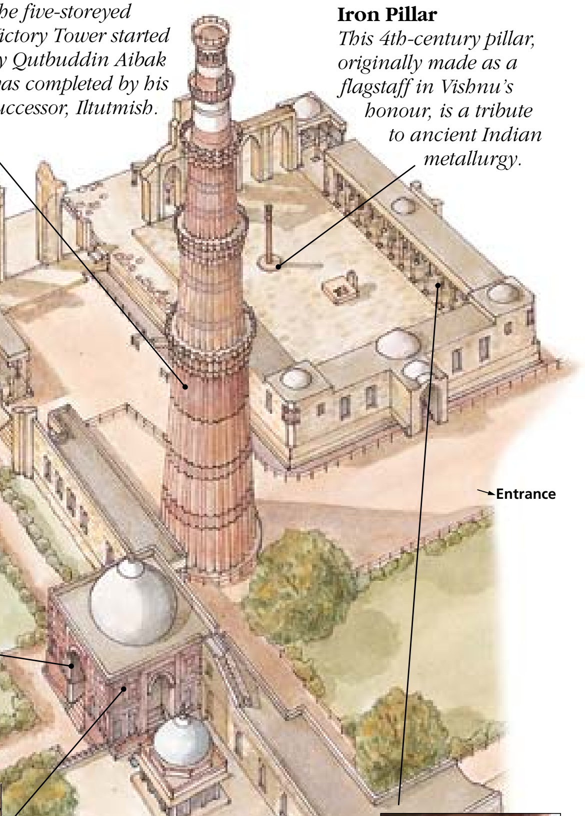
Mehrauli, Delhi-Gurgaon Rd.
○ *7am–6pm, 7–9:30pm daily.*
Qutb Festival (Oct/Nov).



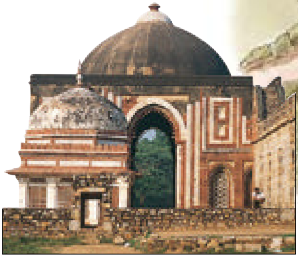
Qutb Minazzzzr
The five-storeyed Victory Tower started by Qutbuddin Aibak was completed by his successor, Iltutmish.



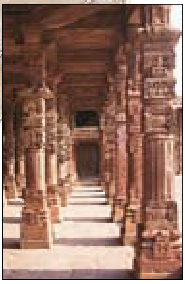
Iron Pillar
This 4th-century pillar, originally made as a flagstaff in Vishnu's honour, is a tribute to ancient Indian metallurgy.



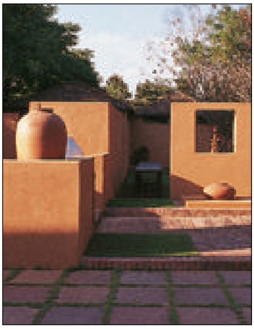
Carved Panels
Panels carved with inscriptions from the Koran embellish the gateway.



Alai Darwaza
This gateway to the complex, erected in 1311 by Alauddin Khilji, is one of the earliest buildings in India to employ the Islamic principles of arched construction.



Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque
Hindu motifs, such as bells and garlands, are clearly visible on the pillars of this mosque.



Pots displayed at Sanskriti Museum

Sanskriti Museum ㉜

Anandgram, Mehrauli-Gurgaon Rd. **Tel** *(011) 2650 1796.* ○ *daily.* ● *public hols.*

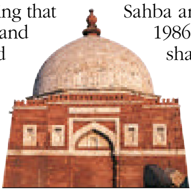
This unusual museum is set amid beautifully landscaped, spacious grounds. Exhibits are displayed both in the garden and in specially constructed rural huts. The collection itself is equally unusual in its devotion to objects of everyday use, that have been exquisitely crafted by unknown, rural artisans. OP Jain, whose personal collections gave birth to this museum, has donated combs, nutcrackers, lamps, toys, foot-scrubbers and kitchenware, to demonstrate how even the most utilitarian objects can possess an innate beauty. Terracotta objects from all over India, in every shape and size, are also on display. They include striking pots made in traditional techniques unchanged for centuries, and towering figures of South Indian village deities.

Tughluqabad ㉝

Off Mehrauli-Badarpur Rd. **Monuments** ○ *daily.*

The third of Delhi's early capitals *(see p91)*, Tughluqabad is dominated by its spectacular fort, built by Ghiyasuddin Tughluq early in the 14th century. The fort was so sturdily constructed that its rubble-built walls, following the contours of the hill, survive intact all along the 7-km (4-mile) perimeter. Rising from the citadel to the right of the main entrance are the ruins of the Vijay Mandal ("Tower of Victory"). To the left is a rectangular area where arches are all that remain of a complex of palaces, houses and halls. Legend has it that when Ghiyasuddin tried to prevent the building of the *baoli* at Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya's *dargah (see p82)*, the saint cursed him, saying that one day only jackals and the Gujjar tribe would inhabit his capital.

A good view of the fort and of the smaller, adjoining Adilabad Fort, is possible from the walls. Adilabad was built by Muhammad bin Tughluq, who is believed to have killed his father Ghiyasuddin by contriving to have a gateway collapse on him. Both are buried in **Ghiyasuddin's Tomb**, attached to the Tughluqabad Fort by a causeway that crossed the dammed waters of a lake. Constructed in red sandstone and inlaid with white marble, the tomb's sloping walls pioneered a style that was used in all subsequent Tughluq architecture.



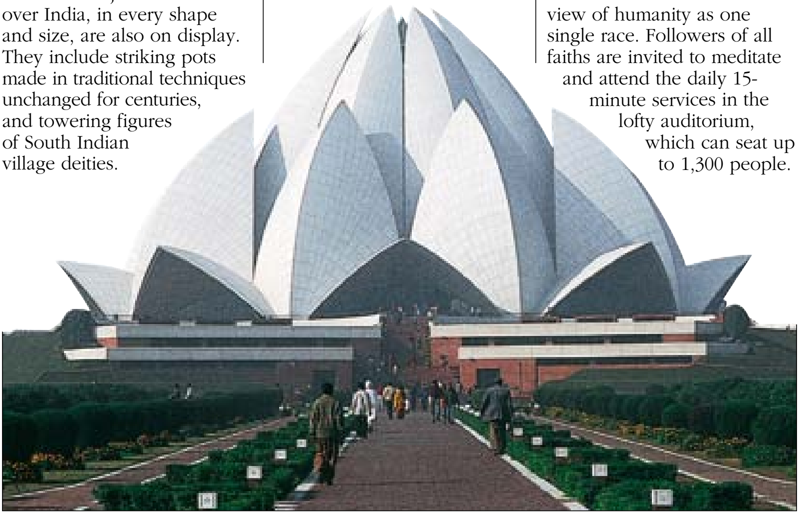
Ghiyasuddin Tughluq's Tomb

Baha'i House of Worship ㉞

Bahapur, Kalkaji. **Tel** *(011) 2644 4029.* ○ *Tue–Sun.* ● *public hols.* **Prayer services** *10am, noon, 3pm & 5pm.*

Delhi's most innovative modern structure, the Baha'i House of Worship is a world where silence and order prevail. Designed by Iranian architect Fariburz Sahba and completed in 1986, the arresting shape of its unfurling, 27-petalled, white marble lotus has given it its more popular name, the Lotus Temple. The edifice is circled by nine pools and 92 ha (227 acres) of green lawns.

The Baha'i sect originated in Persia and is based on a view of humanity as one single race. Followers of all faiths are invited to meditate and attend the daily 15-minute services in the lofty auditorium, which can seat up to 1,300 people.



The lotus-domed Baha'i House of Worship, one of Delhi's most spectacular sights

Shopping & Entertainment in Delhi

The hallmark of shopping in Delhi is the bewildering variety of merchandise, markets and styles. Besides Connaught Place, almost every residential colony boasts a market. Old, established shops, bazaars and markets co-exist happily with glitzy, high-end boutiques and department stores and one can buy anything from seasonal fruits and traditional handicrafts to designer clothes and the latest imported electronic items. Delhi also has a rich and varied cultural life. The city's cultural calendar livens up between October and March when the season is in full swing. The number of events multiply as all major festivals of music, dance, theatre and cinema are held at this time of the year.

SHOPS AND MARKETS

New Delhi's main shopping centres are in and around Connaught Place and Janpath where the state emporiums and Cottage Industries offer an exciting and varied range of textiles, jewellery and souvenirs at fixed and reasonable prices. In the north is Chandni Chowk (see pp84–5), the traditional market, while to the south are Khan Market, Sundar Nagar and Santushti, the old urban villages of Hauz Khas, Shahpur Jat and Mehrauli, and Dilli Haat, a crafts bazaar on Aurobindo Marg. The five-star hotels also have convenient shopping arcades selling carefully selected goods.

ANTIQUES, JEWELLERY AND SILVER

Genuine antiques are rare to come by and, in any case, cannot be taken out of the country unless certified by the ASI *(see p759)*. However, the **Crafts Museum Shop**, hotel boutiques and Sundar Nagar market stock excellent reproductions of miniature paintings, woodcarvings and bronzes made by artisans today. Superb pieces of traditional jewellery, including *kundan* and *meenakari,* are available at Sundar Nagar market, especially at **Bharany's**. Silver jewellery, both traditional and modern, can be found in the gullies of Dariba Kalan, in Chandni Chowk and Sundar Nagar. **Ravissant** and **Cooke & Kelvy** are the best places for contemporary silverware.

TEXTILES, SHAWLS AND CARPETS

Traditional textiles are available in most of the better shops and emporiums, particularly **Cottage Industries** on Janpath. A wide and exclusive selection of personal care products are on offer at **Forest Essentials** in Defence Colony. **The Shop, Anokhi** and **FabIndia** are the best places for good quality ready–made garments, linen and light cotton quilts. Lodi Colony market has several boutiques offering eclectic Indian designer-wear, including the stylish **Abraham & Thakore. Shyam Ahuja** sells linen, textiles and *dhurries*, while **The Carpet Cellar** is an excellent outlet for Afghan and Kashmiri carpets and pashmina shawls.

HANDICRAFTS AND GIFTS

The Crafts Museum Shop, **Tulsi**, **Kamala** and Dilli Haat have a wide selection of Indian handicrafts and other gift items, while **Tibet House** has woollen shawls, jackets, *thangkas* and carpets. For quality leather goods such as, handmade shoes and jackets, the many Chinese-owned outlets in Connaught Place, set the standards for comfort and durability. For trendier goods there is **Da Milano**.

In Chandni Chowk's Dariba Kalan is **Gulab Singh Johari Mal**, a marvellous old-fashioned shop where one can test Indian perfume *(attar)* from cut-glass bottles. Their soaps are also worth buying. Herbal cosmetics, incense sticks, perfumed candles and aromatherapy oils and lotions are available in many of the larger stores, including **Good Earth**, which also stocks towels, bathrobes and massage mats. Cosmetics by Vama Ayurveda, Biotique and Shahnaz Herbal are found at most chemists.

Spices and fresh seasonal fruit are found at INA Market *(see p89)* and Indian tea is sold in Kaka Nagar Market (near the Oberoi Hotel on Zakir Hussain Marg), Khan Market and at **Mittal Tea House** in Lodi Colony market.

ENTERTAINMENT GUIDES, TICKETS AND VENUES

All newspapers list the day's entertainment on their engagements page. Other useful sources of information on events, restaurants, sports and related activities are the weekly *Delhi Diary*, and the monthly magazine, *First City*.

At several venues in the city, such as the **India International Centre**, entry is free. At others, such as the **Indian Council for Cultural Relations** (ICCR), it is by invitation only. Tickets for selected music and dance festivals and theatre, however, are advertised and sold at certain bookshops or at the box office.

Most of Delhi's cultural activities are clustered around Mandi House *(see p75)*. The largest auditorium, **Kamani** on Copernicus Marg, hosts concerts, plays and classical music and dance performances throughout the year. During the season, music and dance events are also held at FICCI Auditorium, on the roundabout, **Triveni Kala Sangam**, on Tansen Marg, and at Azad Bhavan, the main venue for performances organized by the state-run ICCR. Excellent plays, in both Hindi and English, are held at the open air auditorium of the **National School of Drama**, the main repertory company at Bhawalpur House, and at the **Shri Ram Centre** nearby. Colourful folk dances from all over India, organized by the

Trade Fair Authority of India, are held during the annual Trade India Fair in November, at Pragati Maidan, the huge exhibition grounds on Mathura Road.

Both the **India Habitat Centre** and the India International Centre, on Lodi Road, organize a variety of events that include films, plays, concerts, exhibitions, lectures and discussions. The mega **Siri Fort Complex**, in South Delhi, is the venue for most prestigious events.

Popular Indian and foreign films are screened at the many cinema halls dotted all over the city. Among the better equipped halls are **PVR Anupam** in Saket and **PVR Priya** in Vasant Vihar.

PERFORMING ARTS

Delhi is the best place to experience the range and richness of classical dance and music. Performances by the best exponents of the major styles of Odissi, Kathak, Bharat Natyam and Kathakali take place during the high season, between October and March. The same is true of concerts of Hindustani and Carnatic classical music. India's vibrant folk dance and music traditions, such as the devotional music of the Sufis, dance-dramas from Kerala, puppet shows from Rajasthan and Karnataka, can also be seen at various venues. Check newspapers for details on location and tickets.

EXHIBITIONS

Major exhibitions are held at the **National Museum**, **National Gallery of Modern Art**, **Art Heritage** and the Crafts Museum. These include special collections of rare sculpture and paintings from museums all over India, as well as from abroad. Recent years have seen exhibitions of Picasso's paintings, the Nizam of Hyderabad's fabulous jewels and Mughal paintings from Queen Elizabeth II's private collection.

Regular exhibitions of contemporary art and craft, photography and graphics are also held in the many art galleries around Mandi House.

DIRECTORY

ANTIQUES, JEWELLERY AND SILVER

Bharany's
Sundar Nagar Market.
Tel *(011) 2435 8528.*

Cooke & Kelvy
Janpath.
Tel *(011) 2372 1081.*

Crafts Museum Shop
Pragati Maidan.
Tel *(011) 2337 1269.*

Ravissant
Oberoi Hotel.
Tel *(011) 2436 3030.*

TEXTILES, SHAWLS AND CARPETS

Abraham & Thakore
31, Lodi Colony Main Mkt.
Tel *(011) 2460 3455.*

Anokhi
Khan Market.
Tel *(011) 2460 3423.*

The Carpet Cellar
1 Anand Lok.
Tel *(011) 2626 1777.*

Cottage Industries
Janpath.
Tel *(011) 2332 0439.*

FabIndia
Greater Kailash I,
N-Block Market.
Tel *(011) 2621 2183.*

Forest Essentials
46-B, Khan Market.
Tel *(011) 4175 7057.*

The Shop
Connaught Place.
Tel *(011) 2374 6050.*

Shyam Ahuja
Santushti.
Tel *(011) 2467 0112.*

HANDICRAFTS AND GIFTS

Da Milano
Connaught Place.
Tel *(011) 2341 5490.*

Good Earth
Santushti.
Mehrauli.
Tel *(011) 2685 1757.*

Gulab Singh Johri Mal
Dariba Kalan,
Chandni Chowk.
Tel *(011) 2327 1345.*

Kamala
Rajiv Gandhi Handicrafts
Bhavan, Baba Kharak
Singh Marg.
Tel *(011) 2374 3322.*

Mittal Tea House
8-A, Lodi Colony Mkt.
Tel *(011) 2461 5709.*

Tibet House
Lodi Rd.
Tel *(011) 2461 1515.*

Tulsi
Santushti.
Tel *(011) 2687 0339.*

ENTERTAINMENT VENUES

India Habitat Centre
Lodi Rd.
Tel *(011) 2468 2222.*

India International Centre
40, Lodi Estate,
Max Mueller Marg.
Tel *(011) 2461 9431.*

Indian Council for Cultural Relations
Azad Bhavan,
IP Estate.
Tel *(011) 2337 9309.*

Kamani Auditorium
Copernicus Marg.
Tel *(011) 2338 8084.*

National School of Drama
Bhawalpur House.
Tel *(011) 2338 9402.*

PVR Anupam
Community Centre,
Saket.
Tel *(011) 2686 5999.*

PVR Priya
Basant Lok,
Vasant Vihar.
Tel *(011) 2614 0048.*

Shri Ram Centre
Safdar Hashmi Marg.
Tel *(011) 2371 4307.*

Siri Fort Complex
Asian Village Complex.
Tel *(011) 2649 3370.*

Trade Fair Authority of India
Pragati Maidan.
Tel *(011) 2337 1540.*

Triveni Kala Sangam
205, Tansen Marg.
Tel *(011) 2371 8833.*

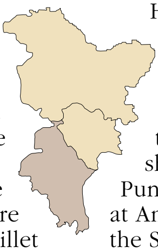
EXHIBITIONS

Art Heritage
Triveni Kala Sangam.
Tel *(011) 2371 9470.*

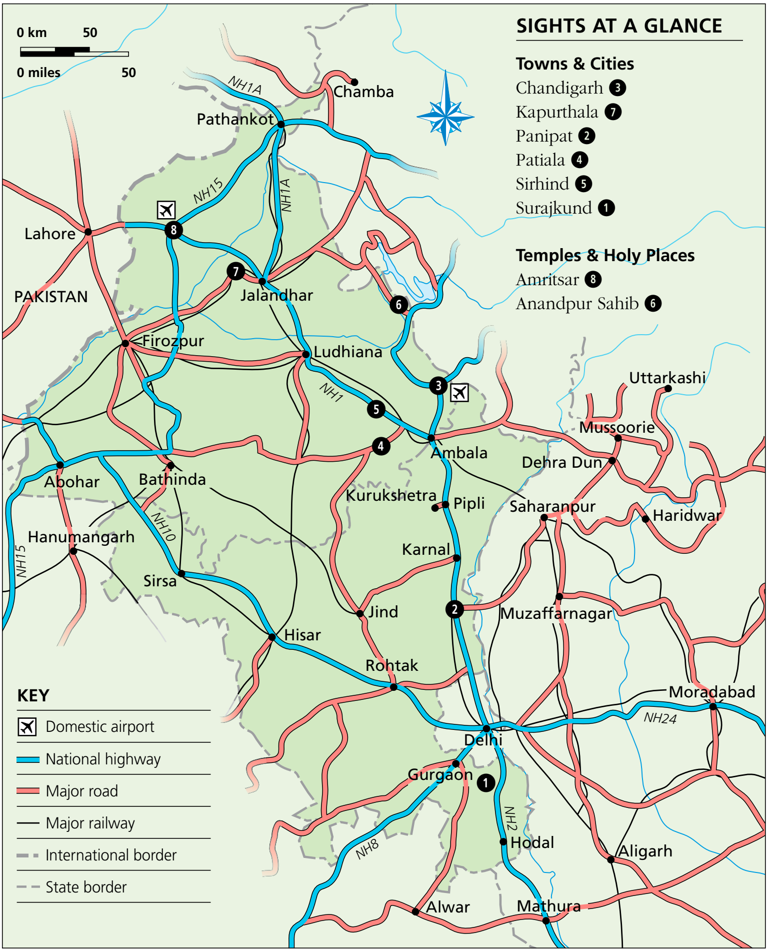
National Gallery of Modern Art
Jaipur House,
India Gate.
Tel *(011) 2338 2835.*

National Museum
Janpath.
Tel *(011) 2301 9272.*

HARYANA & PUNJAB



Haryana and Punjab cover the vast plains that stretch between the River Indus and the Gangetic belt. Fertile soil and the improved agricultural techniques of the 1960s Green Revolution *(see p62)*, have made this region the granary of India, producing more than half the wheat, rice and millet grown in the country. Industrial development followed the success of the Green Revolution, and the two states now also have flourishing dairy and wool-based industries. Most visitors pass only briefly through Haryana and Punjab, usually on their way to Himachal Pradesh, taking in en route the states' two best known attractions: Chandigarh, the planned city built by the famous architect Le Corbusier, which is the shared capital of Haryana and Punjab, and the Golden Temple at Amritsar, the holiest shrine of the Sikhs. For those who care to explore further, there are the former princely states of Patiala and Kapurthala, with their distinctive architecture, and the holy *dargahs* at Panipat and Sirhind. Above all, the warmth and hospitality of the people is this area's special attraction.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0 miles 50
NH1A
Chamba
Pathankot
NH15
NH1A
Lahore
PAKISTAN
Jalandhar
Firozpur
Ludhiana
NH1
Ambala
Dehra Dun
Mussoorie
Uttarkashi
Abohar
Bathinda
Kurukshetra
Pipli
Saharanpur
Haridwar
Hanumangarh
NH10
NH15
Sirsa
Karnal
Jind
Muzaffarnagar
Hisar
Rohtak
Moradabad
NH24
Delhi
Gurgaon
NH2
Hodal
NH8
Aligarh
Alwar
Mathura

SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

Towns & Cities

Chandigarh ❸
Kapurthala ❼
Panipat ❷
Patiala ❹
Sirhind ❺
Surajkund ❶

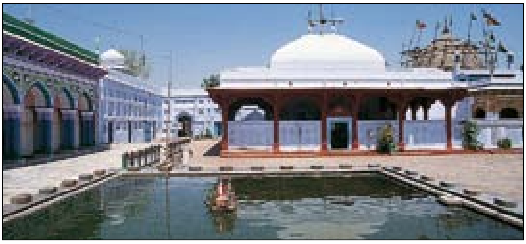
Temples & Holy Places

Amritsar ❽
Anandpur Sahib ❻

KEY

✈ Domestic airport
National highway
Major road
Major railway
International border
State border

◁ **A view of the Hari Mandir or Golden Temple from across the sacred pool, Amrit Sarovar, at Amritsar**



Sufi saint Qalandar Shah's *dargah* at Panipat, built in the 14th century

Surajkund ❶

Faridabad district. 21 km (13 miles) S of Delhi. 🚌 ℹ *Haryana Tourism, Chanderlok Building, 36, Janpath, New Delhi, (011) 2332 4910.* 🎪 *Surajkund Crafts Mela (Feb).*

This historic reservoir, built between the 10th and 11th centuries by King Surajpal of the Rajput Tomar dynasty, is today a popular picnic spot. The original embankment of stone terraces surrounding the tank, specially built to trap rainwater, still exists. Nearby, an artificial lake is well-equipped with boating facilities. The area comes alive in the first two weeks of February, when an excellent crafts *mela* is held here, with artisans from all over India selling their wares in a specially created village. Puppets from Rajasthan, bell metal beasts from Orissa, and mirrorwork from Gujarat are displayed alongside a variety of food stalls, while musicians and folk dancers weave through the crowds, giving the fair a joyous, carnival air.

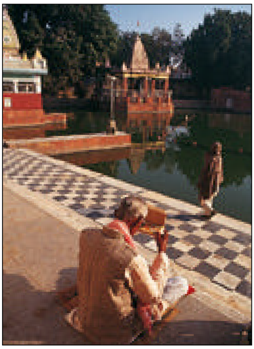
Folk singers performing at the Surajkund Crafts Mela

Panipat ❷

Panipat district. 85 km (53 miles) N of Delhi. 🚆 🚌 🎪 *Urs of Qalandar Shah (Jan/Feb).*

The site of three decisive battles that changed the course of Indian history, including one which led to the founding of the Mughal Empire *(see pp50–51)* in 1526, Panipat is situated on a flat, dusty plain and traces its history to the epic age. The older part of the town has some interesting *havelis*, and a 14th-century tomb-shrine dedicated to the Sufi saint Qalandar Shah. The new town is a busy, bustling settlement, strung along National Highway 1, which follows the route of the historic Grand Trunk Road *(see p179)*. Today, Panipat is well-known for its furnishing fabrics and carpets.

Environs
Karnal, 34 km (21 miles) north of Panipat, lies at the heart of a rich pastoral region and is an important agricultural and cattle breeding centre. The National Dairy Research Institute is situated here. Some 90 km (56 miles) north of Panipat, the pilgrim town of **Kurukshetra** is dotted with temples and marks the mythical site of the epic battle between the Pandavas and Kauravas, the heroes of the *Mahabharata (see p26)*.



Ritual prayers at the sacred temple tank at Kurukshetra

Chandigarh ❸

Chandigarh district. 238 km (148 miles) N of Delhi. 👥 *750,000.* ✈ *11 km (7 miles) S of city centre.* 🚆 🚌 ℹ *Interstate Bus Terminal, Sector 17, (0172) 272 1173.* 🎪 *Rose Festival (Feb).*

The state capital of both Haryana and Punjab, Chandigarh was built in the early 1950s by the internationally renowned architect Le Corbusier. It is considered the first modern city of post-Independent India and is laid out on a grid, divided evenly into 57 blocks or sectors.

Le Corbusier conceived the city along the lines of a modular man, with the **Capitol Complex**, which includes the Secretariat, Assembly and High Court buildings, as its "head". The main shopping area, **Sector 17**, is the "heart" of Le Corbusier's plan, and is set around a central plaza and fountain, lined with shops indicating that Chandigarh's affluent citizens are extremely fond of good food and clothes. Adjoining this sector is a gently undulating stretch of green, the city's "lungs", with an enormous **Rose Garden** that is at its best in February. Over a 1,000 varieties of colourful roses bloom amidst winding paths, fountains and sprawling, beautifully tended lawns.

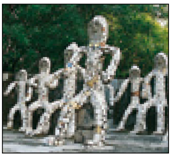
The city's extensive residential sectors make up its "torso", with neat houses and gardens showing impressive evidence of the residents' green fingers. Each road is lined with a different species of flowering tree – laburnum, jacaranda, *gulmohar* – adding colour to the cityscape.

Chandigarh's **Museum and Art Gallery** in Sector 10 houses one of the country's finest collections of Gandharan sculpture *(see p43)* and miniature paintings. Among the best exhibits are a serene 6th-century Standing Bodhisattva in the Gandharan style, and a rare 11th-century statue of Vishnu holding a conch shell from Kashmir. The miniatures section has a comprehensive selection of Pahari paintings *(see p121)*

Chandigarh's Capitol Complex, typical of Le Corbusier's functional style

from the Kangra, Basohli and Guler schools, while modern art includes mountainscapes by the Russian painter Nicholas Roerich *(see p128).*

Lying opposite the Capitol Complex, the **Rock Garden** is one of the city's most popular tourist spots. Spread over 1.6 ha (4 acres) in Sector 1, it was created in the 1970s by an ex-road inspector, Nek Chand, and is a refreshing contrast to Le Corbusier's severely symmetrical cityscape. The area encloses a unique "kingdom", a labyrinth with hills, waterfalls and caves, and serried ranks of sculptures crafted from such unlikely material as discarded neon lights, fuse switches, broken crockery and glass.



Ceramic figures at Nek Chand's Rock Garden

A short distance away is the man-made **Sukhna Lake**, where a pleasant promenade attracts joggers and walkers. This is one of Chandigarh's prettiest areas, especially in the evenings, when visitors can enjoy dramatic sunsets and views of the twinkling lights of the nearby hill station, Kasauli *(see p113).*

🏛 **Museum and Art Gallery**
Tel *(0172) 274 2501.* ○ *Tue–Sun.* ✋

Environs

The **Pinjore Gardens**, lying 22 km (14 miles) north of Chandigarh, were designed in the 17th century by Fidai Khan, foster brother of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb. They are terraced in the Mughal style and dotted with domed pavilions, fountains and water chutes. **Sanghol**, 40 km (25 miles) west of Chandigarh, has an excavated site of a 2nd-century Buddhist stupa with an interesting museum of Kushana sculpture.

LE CORBUSIER'S CITY

The "open hand", Chandigarh's emblem

In 1950, India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, commissioned the French-Swiss architect Charles Edouard Jeanneret ("Le Corbusier"), to create a new capital for Punjab, as the old capital, Lahore, had become a part of Pakistan after Independence in 1947. The result was a city of concrete blocks and straight arterial roads, projecting Le Corbusier's philosophy of functional efficiency, free of unnecessary ornamentation such as domes and arches. Without any crowded bazaars, Chandigarh lacks the typical bustle and vitality of older Indian towns, and some of Le Corbusier's buildings now look weather-beaten. Yet it remains the country's cleanest and most orderly city and this, perhaps, is Le Corbusier's lasting legacy.

FESTIVALS OF HARYANA & PUNJAB

Qalandar Shah's Urs *(Jan/Feb),* Panipat. This festival honours the Sufi saint Qalandar Shah with qawwali singing and a colourful fair at his shrine.

Surajkund Crafts Mela *(1–15 Feb),* Surajkund. Craftsmen from all over the country congregate with a fine selection of their wares, from hand-woven fabrics to folk toys.

Rose Festival *(Feb),* Chandigarh. The city's gigantic Rose Garden is at its best with flower shows and a weekend carnival of dance and music.

Skilled swordsmanship at the Hola Mohalla festivities

Hola Mohalla *(Mar/Apr),* Anandpur Sahib. The highlight of this fair, held the day after Holi, is a spectacular display of fencing and tent-pegging, as the Nihang Sikhs show off their legendary martial and equestrian skills.

Baisakhi *(14 Apr).* Gala processions, dancing and feasting take place all over Punjab to mark the spring equinox and the beginning of the harvest. Lively *melas* are held at all the major gurdwaras.

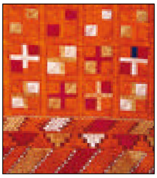
Guru Parab *(Nov).* Celebrated across Punjab on the first full moon night after Diwali *(see p37),* the birthday of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, is particularly spectacular at the Golden Temple at Amritsar. Thousands of lamps illuminate the temple every night from Diwali onwards.

The splendid Durbar Hall at the Qila Mubarak, Patiala

Patiala ④

Patiala district. 63 km (39 miles) SW of Chandigarh. *269,000.* *Basant (Feb).* *Mon–Sat.*

Patiala, situated between the Satluj and Ghaggar rivers, was formerly a princely state, ruled by a string of flamboyant rulers in the 19th century, who made its name a byword for everything larger than life. Thus, the "Patiala Peg" is a whopping measure of whisky, the Patiala *salwar* three times the width of an ordinary one, and the gargantuan palace, to quote an overawed English visitor, "makes Versailles look like a cottage". Its rulers were also enthusiastic patrons of the arts, architecture and sports, and the city's gracious ambience and its rich folk crafts owe a great deal to their generous encouragement.

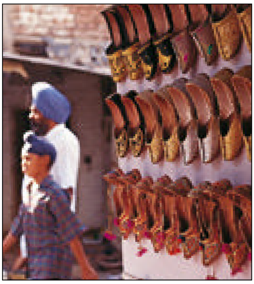


A typical *phulkari* motif

The present city has grown around the **Qila Mubarak**, a fort built in 1763. Its oldest part, Qila Androon, though derelict, has traces of fine wall paintings. The **Durbar Hall**, added later, stands to the right of the entrance gates and is now a museum with a beautifully ornamented ceiling and well-preserved murals. Inside it, is a spectacular display of cannons and arms, including the sword of the Persian ruler Nadir Shah *(see p52)* who invaded India in 1739. The lively bazaar around the fort offers the city's famous hand-crafted leather shoes (*jutties*), tasselled silken braids *(pirandis)* and brightly embroidered *phulkari* fabric.

The enormous **Old Moti Bagh Palace**, completed in the early years of the 20th century in the Indo-Saracenic style, has as many as 15 dining halls. Counted as one of the largest residences in Asia, it is set amidst terraced gardens and water channels, inspired by Mughal gardens. The terraces lead to the Sheesh Mahal, where the **Art Gallery** displays miniature paintings, rare manuscripts, objets d'art, and hunting trophies from the former royal collection. Pride of place is given to a collection of medals, some awarded to, and some collected by, the former rulers. The Art Gallery overlooks a large tank flanked by two towers, with a rope suspension bridge to connect them. The main palace has now been given over to the National Institute of Sports and the large pleasure pool where the maharaja once watched dancing girls cavorting has been converted into a wrestling pit.

In the north of the city are the **Baradari Gardens**, laid out in the late 19th century by Prince Rajinder Singh, an avid horticulturist, who also created a rock garden and fern house here. The splendid **Kali Temple**, which is located within the walled city, has a large marble image of Kali, brought here all the way from Makrana in Rajasthan.



Hand-embroidered *jutties* on sale in Patiala's bazaar

Durbar Hall Museum
Tue–Sun. *with permission.*

Old Moti Bagh Palace
Tue–Sun

Sirhind ⑤

Fatehgarh Sahib district. 55 km (34 miles) W of Chandigarh. *31,000.* *Punjab Tourism, (01763) 22 9170.* *Urs at Rauza Sharif (Aug), Shaheedi Jor Mela (Dec).*

The town of Sirhind was one of the most important settlements in North India between the 16th and 18th centuries. Once the capital of the Pathan Sur sultans, the ruins of whose massive fort can still be seen, Sirhind was also a favourite halting place for the Mughal emperors on their annual journeys to Kashmir. In the 11th century, Mahmud of Ghazni *(see p48)* expanded his empire up to this area, thus giving the town its name, which in Persian means "Frontier of India".

The Mughals constructed several beautiful buildings here, in the area now called **Aam Khas Bagh**, which today is a tourist complex run by the government. Especially interesting is the **Royal Hamam**, a complex structure for hot and cold baths, that uses water drawn from wells nearby through an intricate system of hand pulleys. Close to the baths are the ruins of Shah Jahan's double-storeyed palace, the **Daulat Mahal**, and the better preserved **Sheesh Mahal**,

Rauza Sharif, Sahaikh Ahmad Faruqi Sirhindi's *dargah* in Sirhind

whose walls still have traces of the original tilework and decorative plaster.

To the north of Aam Khas Bagh is the white **Fatehgarh Sahib Gurdwara**, standing in the midst of bright yellow mustard fields, which bloom in January. It was built to honour the memory of the martyred sons of the tenth Sikh guru, Gobind Singh, who were walled in alive at this spot by the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb in 1705, for refusing to convert to Islam.

Adjacent to the gurdwara is an important pilgrimage site for Muslims, the tomb-shrine of the Sufi saint and theologian, Shaikh Ahmad Faruqi Sirhindi, who is also known as Mujaddad-al-Saini ("The Reformer of the Millennium"). This magnificent octagonal structure, with its dome covered in glazed blue tiles, was built in the 16th century. Known as the **Rauza Sharif**, it is considered as holy as the Dargah Sharif in Ajmer *(see p376)*. Standing close to it is a striking tomb from the same period, the **Mausoleum of Mir Miran**, son-in-law of one of the Lodi kings. Also of interest is the **Salavat Beg Haveli**, a fascinating and exceptionally well preserved example of a large Mughal-era house.

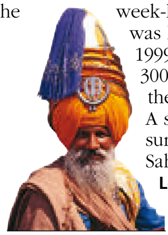
Aam Khas Bagh
Tue–Sun.

Anandpur Sahib ❻

Roopnagar district. 73 km (45 miles) N of Chandigarh. *31,000.*
Hola Mohalla (Mar/Apr).

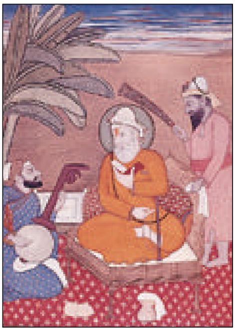
Guarded by the Shivalik Hills and a ring of imposing forts, Anandpur Sahib is a complex of historic Sikh gurdwaras. It was here that the severed head of the ninth guru, Tegh Bahadur, was brought to be cremated, at a site now marked by the **Sisganj Sahib Gurdwara**. The gurdwara also marks the place where the tenth and last guru, Gobind Singh, founded the Khalsa or "Army of the Pure" in 1699, along with five volunteers to help him defend the faith. The **Kesgarh Sahib Gurdwara**, which was built to commemorate this event, is regarded as one of the four *takhts* or principal seats of the Sikh religion – the others are at Amritsar *(see p104)*, Nanded in Maharashtra, and Patna *(see p214)* in Bihar. A week-long celebration was held here in April 1999, to mark the 300th anniversary of the Khalsa.

A series of forts surround Anandpur Sahib on all sides – **Lohagarh Fort** was used as the armoury of the Khalsa army, **Fatehgarh Fort** guarded the route between Delhi and Lahore, and **Taragarh Fort** protected it from attacks by the hill states lying to the north.



A Nihang Sikh in full regalia

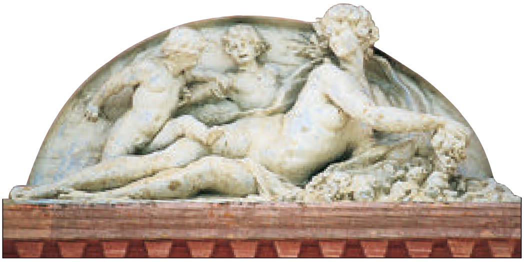
Anandpur Sahib comes to life every year during the Hola Mohalla festival *(see p101)* when thousands of devotees congregate here to watch the blue-robed Nihang Sikhs, descendants of the gurus' personal guards, display their formidable martial and equestrian skills.



A mid-19th-century painting of Guru Nanak with his disciples

SIKHISM

With their characteristic turbans and full beards, the Sikhs are easy to identify. The Sikh religion is a reformist faith, founded by Guru Nanak in the 15th century. Strongly opposed to idol worship, rituals and the caste system, it believes in a formless God. Sikhism is also called the Gurmat, meaning "the Guru's Doctrine" and Sikh temples are known as gurdwaras, literally "doors to the guru". Nanak, the first of a series of ten gurus, chose his successor from among his most devout disciples. Gobind Singh (1666–1708), the tenth and last guru, reorganized the community in 1699 as a military order, the Khalsa, to combat religious persecution by the Mughals. He gave the Sikh community a distinctive religious identity, and from then onwards they were meant to wear the Khalsa's five symbols: *kesh* (long hair), *kachha* (underwear), *kirpan* (small sword), *kangha* (comb) and *kara* (bracelet). Their holy book, the *Guru Granth Sahib*, is kept in the Golden Temple *(see pp106–107)*.



Detail of a marble sculpture, Elysée Palace, Kapurthala

Kapurthala ⑦

Kapurthala district. 165 km (103 miles) NW of Chandigarh. 🚆 🚌

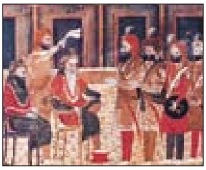
This former princely state owes its extraordinary architectural heritage to the eccentric Maharaja Jagatjit Singh, who created amidst the rich agricultural fields of Punjab, a corner that will be forever France. In 1906, this passionate Francophile, commissioned a French architect to build him a palace modelled on Versailles, with elements of Fontainebleu and the Louvre added on. This amazing structure, which he grandly named the Elysée Palace (now the **Jagatjit Palace**), sits amidst gardens embellished with stone statuary and fountains, and is surrounded by villas built for his officials, modelled on those that were in vogue in the suburbs of Paris in the late 19th century. The palace is now a school, but the building with its ornate interiors and Renaissance-style painted ceilings, is open to public.

After this palace was built, the maharaja went through a Spanish phase. This found expression in the **Buena Vista Hunting Lodge**. Located on the outskirts of the town, it is occupied by his descendants. Another impressive sight is the town's **Moorish Mosque**. Inspired by the grand Qutubiya Mosque in Marrakesh, this was designed by yet another French architect employed by Jagatjit Singh. Its inner dome has been beautifully painted by Punjabi artists.

Jagatjit Palace
○ *Tue–Sun.*

The Jagatjit Palace at Kapurthala, modelled on Versailles in France

MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH



Maharaja Ranjit Singh (r.1790–1839)

Maharaja Ranjit Singh was one of North India's most remarkable rulers. By persuading rival Sikh chieftains to unite, he established the first Sikh kingdom of the Punjab. A military genius, his strong army kept both the British and ambitious Afghan invaders at bay, making Punjab a prosperous centre of trade and industry. A devout Sikh who did much to embellish the Golden Temple, the one-eyed Ranjit Singh was an enlightened ruler who liked to say "God intended me to look at all religions with one eye". A decade after his death, the British annexed the Punjab and seized his fabulous treasures, including the famous Kohinoor diamond.

Amritsar ⑧

Amritsar district. 217 km (135 miles) NW of Chandigarh. *1,000,000.* ℹ *Palace Hotel opp railway station, (0183) 240 2452.* ✈ *12 km (8 miles) NW of city centre.* 🚆 🚌 *Guru Parab (Nov).*

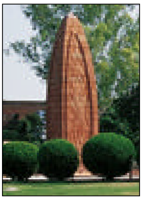
Founded in 1577 by the fourth Sikh guru, Ram Das, Amritsar was built on a site donated by the Mughal emperor Akbar. Located in the heart of the city is the **Golden Temple** *(see pp106–107)*, the Sikh community's holiest shrine, surrounded by a maze of lanes and 18 fortified gateways. In 1984, parts of the Golden Temple were badly damaged during an army operation to flush out extremists holed up inside, who were demanding a separate Sikh homeland. It has now been repaired and carefully restored to its original glory.

The temple complex is actually a city within a city, and the main entrance is through its northern gateway, known as the **Darshani Darwaza**, which also houses the **Central Sikh Museum**. On display are paintings, coins, manuscripts and arms, that combine to create a vivid picture of Sikh history. Steps lead down to the **Parikrama** (marble path-way) which encircles the **Amrit Sarovar** ("Pool of Nectar", after which the town is named), and the main shrine, the golden-domed **Hari Mandir** ("Temple of God"). Several holy and historic sites line the Parikrama, among them a tree shrine called the **Dukh Bhanjani Ber**, said to have miraculous powers for healing diseases, and the **Athsath Tirath** which represents 68 of the holiest Hindu pilgrim shrines.

The Parikrama continues on to the Akal Takht, the seat of the Sikh religious order. Its construction began in 1589 and was completed in 1601 by the sixth guru, Guru Hargobind, when he began organizing the Sikh community into a political entity. The upper floors were built by Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

View of the Golden Temple complex, with the central shrine and main entrance

As part of the daily ritual, the Holy Book of the Sikhs, the *Guru Granth Sahib*, is carried out of the Akal Takht to the Hari Mandir at daybreak. The head priest then opens it for the *vaq*, the message for the day. From dawn till late at night the temple echoes with the music of *ragis*, musicians employed by the temple trust to sing verses from the Holy Book. Every visitor entering the Hari Mandir (including non-Sikhs) is given a dollop of sweet *prasad* (holy offering), and no visit is considered truly complete without a meal at the **Guru ka Langar**, a free kitchen where all visitors are fed a simple meal of *dal-roti* (lentil curry and bread). Run by volunteers, this kitchen can feed 10,000 people a day. Its vast hall, which can seat 3,000 people at a time, serves as a symbol of the caste-free, egalitarian society that the Sikh gurus strove to create. The notion of *kar-seva* (voluntary manual labour for a cause) is an important part of the Sikh order. Tasks such as sweeping the temple precincts, cooking at the *langar* or looking after the pilgrims' shoes, are enthusiastically performed by volunteers. The final evening prayers are over by 9:45pm, when the Holy Book is reverently closed and carried in a silver palanquin back to the Akal Takht. The floors of the temple are then washed with milk and water before the doors of the Darshani Deorhi are closed.



Memorial, Jallianwala Bagh

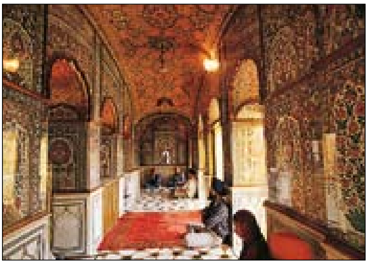
A few other shrines are found just outside the Temple complex. These include a shrine dedicated to Guru Hargobind Singh, as well as the nine-storeyed **Baba Atal Tower** which marks the spot where Atal Rai, the son of Hargobind attained martyrdom. The 16th-century **Durgiana Temple**, visited by Hindus, is dedicated to Durga. It lies 2 km (1.3 miles) northeast of the Golden Temple.

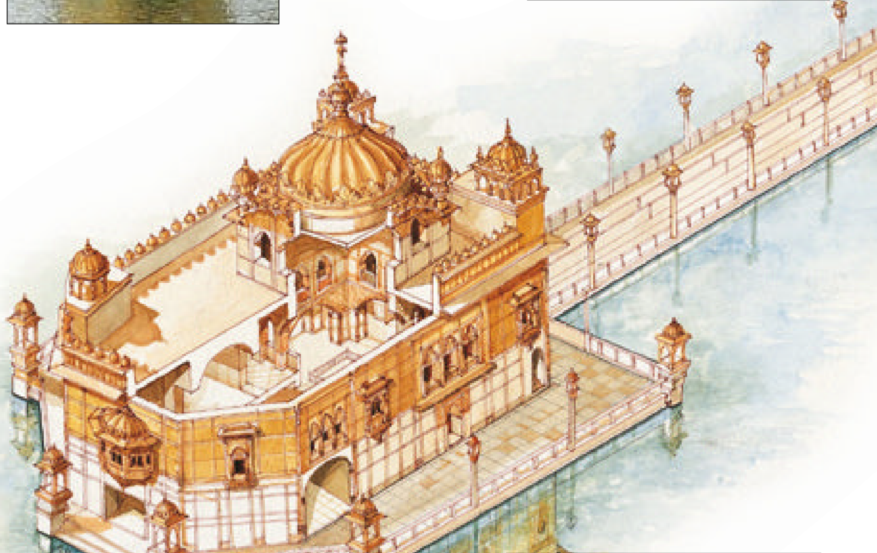
Jallianwala Bagh, also a short distance from the Golden Temple, is the site of an infamous massacre that took place in 1919. Hundreds of unarmed demonstrators were gunned down in this enclosed garden on the orders of General Reginald Dyer, who arrived heading a platoon of infantry from Jalandhar. It was an event which helped hasten the end of British rule in India. A memorial to those killed stands at the east end.

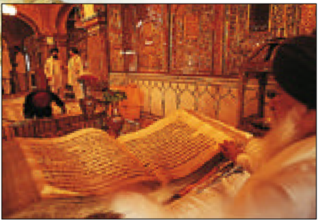
Environs

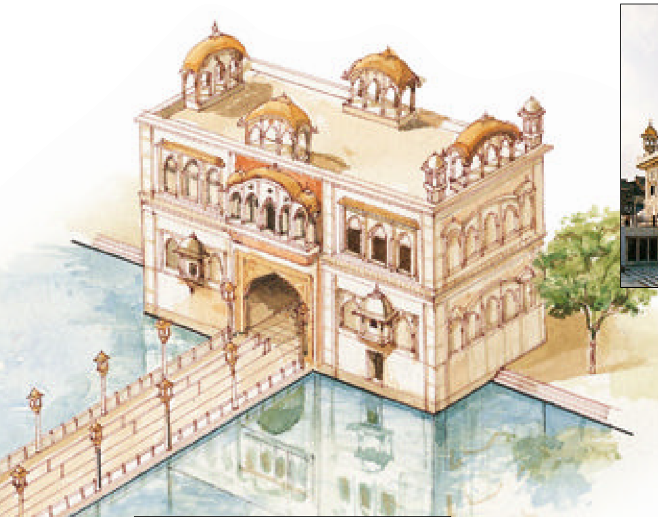
The last checkpost on the Indian border is at **Wagah**, just 9 km (6 miles) from Amritsar, separated from Attari in Pakistan by a thin road. Each evening, as buglers sound the last post, two splendidly uniformed guards on either side of the border goose step across to the flagpoles to lower their respective national flags. Their steps are matched so perfectly that it is like watching a mirror image of the same exercise. The ceremony, which attracts crowds of spectators on both sides, is a poignant reminder of the Partition of 1947 *(see p56)*, when Punjab was divided between two nations.

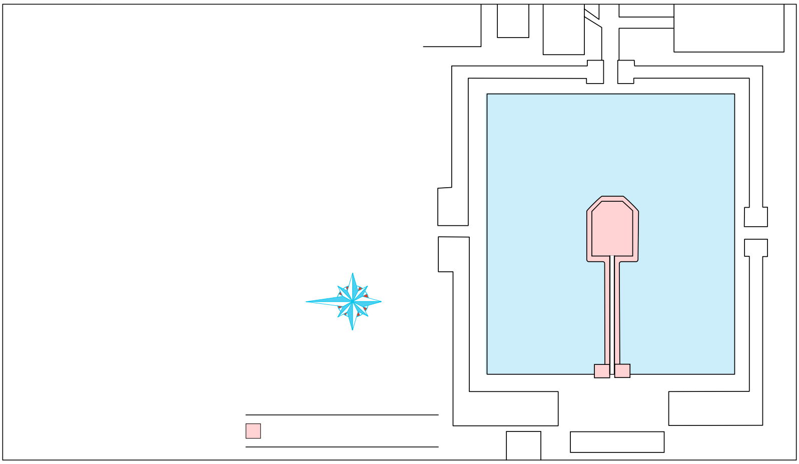
Ceremonial guards accompanying the Holy Book outside the Akal Takht



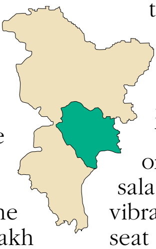




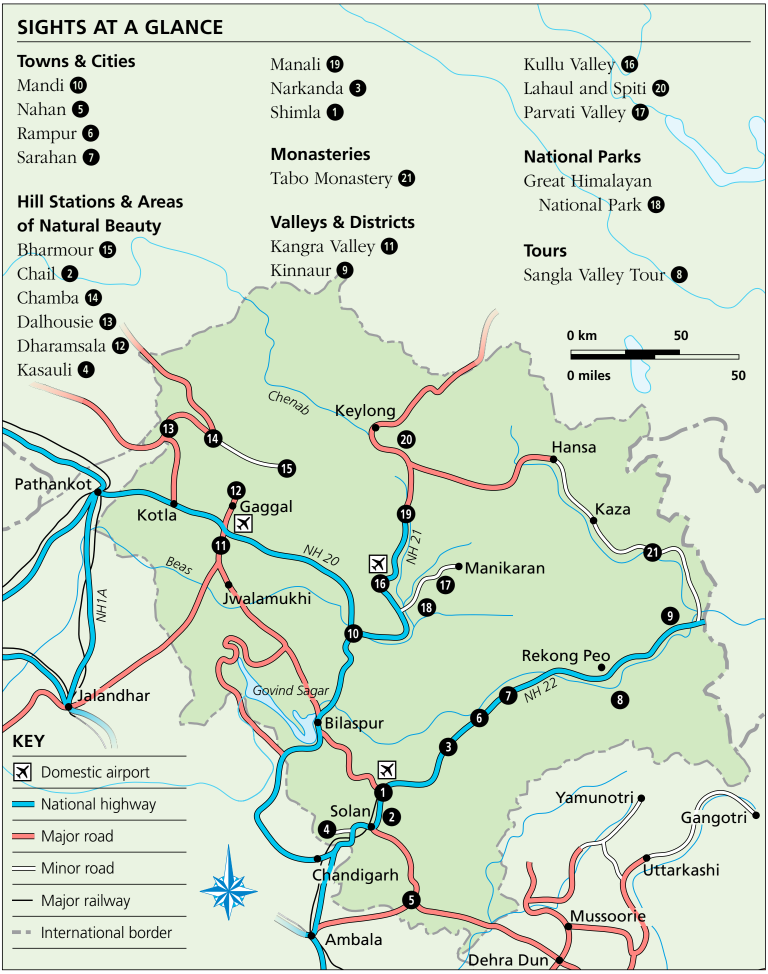




HIMACHAL PRADESH



Himachal, the "Abode of Snow", covers over 56,000 sq km (21,622 sq miles) of the Western Himalayas. The state's terrain rises from the foothills of the Shivaliks bordering the plains of Punjab, and extends to the trans-Himalayan heights of the Zanskar Range, bordering Ladakh and Tibet. Himachal's capital Shimla, famous as the summer capital of the British Raj, remains a popular destination for visitors. Manali, the state's other big hill station, is in the heart of the idyllic Kullu Valley. Watered by the Beas river, it is an excellent base for treks and excursions. West of Kullu, with the magnificent Dhauladhar Range as its backdrop, is the Kangra Valley, dotted with apple orchards. Its main town is Dharamsala, home to the Dalai Lama and a vibrant Tibetan community, and the seat of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile. In the eastern part of the state is Kinnaur with its green pastures and enchanting villages, while Lahaul and Spiti to the north are lands of rugged grandeur, with Buddhist monasteries clinging to steep, rocky cliffs.



SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

Towns & Cities
Mandi ⑩
Nahan ⑤
Rampur ⑥
Sarahan ⑦

Hill Stations & Areas of Natural Beauty
Bharmour ⑮
Chail ②
Chamba ⑭
Dalhousie ⑬
Dharamsala ⑫
Kasauli ④

Manali ⑲
Narkanda ③
Shimla ①

Monasteries
Tabo Monastery ㉑

Valleys & Districts
Kangra Valley ⑪
Kinnaur ⑨

Kullu Valley ⑯
Lahaul and Spiti ⑳
Parvati Valley ⑰

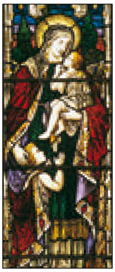
National Parks
Great Himalayan National Park ⑱

Tours
Sangla Valley Tour ⑧

Chenab
Keylong
Hansa
Kaza
Pathankot
Kotla
Gaggal
NH 20
NH 21
Manikaran
Beas
Jwalamukhi
NH1A
Rekong Peo
NH 22
Govind Sagar
Bilaspur
Jalandhar
Solan
Yamunotri
Gangotri
Uttarkashi
Chandigarh
Mussoorie
Ambala
Dehra Dun
0 km 50
0 miles 50
KEY
Domestic airport
National highway
Major road
Minor road
Major railway
International border

◁ **Buddhist prayer flags fluttering in the wind, in the rugged mountains of Spiti**

Shimla ①



Stained glass, Christ Church

A popular hill station in North India, Shimla's spectacular location, thickly forested slopes and invigorating climate have attracted countless visitors since the small village was discovered by Captain Charles Kennedy in the early 19th century. In 1864, it became the summer headquarters of the British government in India. Today it is the fast-growing capital of Himachal Pradesh. Though many of the surrounding spurs and forests are now covered with concrete buildings, Shimla still retains much of its colonial charm.

Christ Church and the Municipal Library on the Ridge

The Ridge

N of The Mall.

A popular promenade and the centre of Shimla's busy social and cultural scene, the Ridge, situated at a height of 2,230 m (7,316 ft), is an open stretch of land on the western shoulder of Jakhu Hill. From here, the snowcapped peaks of the Himalayan Range stretch in an arc across the northern horizon. Ceremonial parades and official state functions are also held here.

Christ Church

○ *daily.* ✝ *8am, 11am Sun. Contact caretaker if church is closed.*

Dominating the eastern end of the Ridge is the Gothic Christ Church, a prominent landmark. Constructed in 1846, it was one of the first churches built in North India. Its fine stained-glass windows and impressive organ were acquired in the 19th century. The fresco around the chancel window was designed by Lockwood Kipling, Rudyard Kipling's father. Shimla's mock-Tudor **Municipal Library** is nearby.

The Mall

Shops ○ *Mon–Sat. Restricted vehicular movement.*

This 7-km (4-mile) long thoroughfare, running from Boileauganj in the west to Chhota Shimla in the south-east, demarcates the original limits of the town. The central section of The Mall, flanked by rows of half-timbered buildings, has always been, and still remains, its most fashionable area with a profusion of restaurants, bars and up-market shops. The Mall's highest spot, Scandal Point, is marked by a statue of Lala Lajpat Rai, the famous freedom fighter. The so-called "scandal" refers to the reputed abduction of an English lady in the late 19th century from this spot by Maharaja Bhupinder Singh of Patiala *(see p102)*. Nearby are the timber-framed Post Office, the Town Hall and the jewel-like Gaiety Theatre, opened in 1887, and still a popular venue for amateur dramatics. A favoured pastime for both local residents and visitors, is to stroll along The Mall, from Scandal Point to Combermere Bridge. Further ahead on this stretch lies the charming mock-Tudor Clarkes Hotel.

Lower Bazaar

Shops ○ *Mon–Sat.*

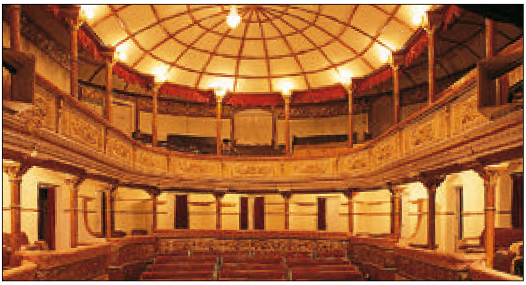
Below the central section of The Mall is the Lower Bazaar, which Kipling once referred to as "that crowded rabbit warren catering to the native population of Shimla". Offering the option of cheaper wares and less fashionable hostelries and eating places, it remains the poor man's Mall. Lower still is the **Ganj**, a congested bazaar where the town's wholesale trade in groceries takes place. This, more than any other part of town, retains a flavour of times gone by. Customers and coolies mingle in crowded lanes redolent with the aroma of the many spices on display.

State Museum

Chaura Maidan. ***Tel*** *(0177) 280 5044.*

○ *Tue–Sun.* ● *public hols.*

The State Museum, housed in a reconstructed Raj building called Inverarm, was opened to the public in 1974. It has, since then, built up a fairly good collection of almost 10,000 artifacts from various parts of Himachal Pradesh. The exhibits, displayed in 15



The interior of the Gaiety Theatre, a focal point of Shimla's cultural life galleries, include stone sculptures dating from the 6th to 11th centuries, belonging to the Gupta and Pratihara periods, and a collection of Kangra miniatures *(see p121)* representing various themes, based on the seasons (*Baramasa*), musical modes (*Ragamala*) and episodes from the *Gita Govinda*, a devotional poem. Most impressive, however, is a spectacular series of mid-19th-century wall paintings from Chamba, housed in the ground floor galleries.

Jakhu Hill Temple

Jakhu Hill. ○ *daily.*

The forested dome of Jakhu Hill, at 2,450 m (8,038 ft) is the highest point in Shimla. At its peak stands a temple dedicated to the monkey god, Hanuman. According to the epic *Ramayana (see p27)*, Hanuman rested here during his journey to fetch the Sanjivini herb from the Himalayas to save the wounded Lakshman's life. A steep 2 km (1.3 miles) climb from the Ridge to the summit through deodar and oak forests offers panoramic views of Shimla and its suburbs. Monkeys are a common sight all over Shimla but Jakhu is their kingdom. Visitors should watch out for simian hands rifling through their pockets and belongings.

Viceregal Lodge

The Mall. ***Tel** (0177) 283 1375.*

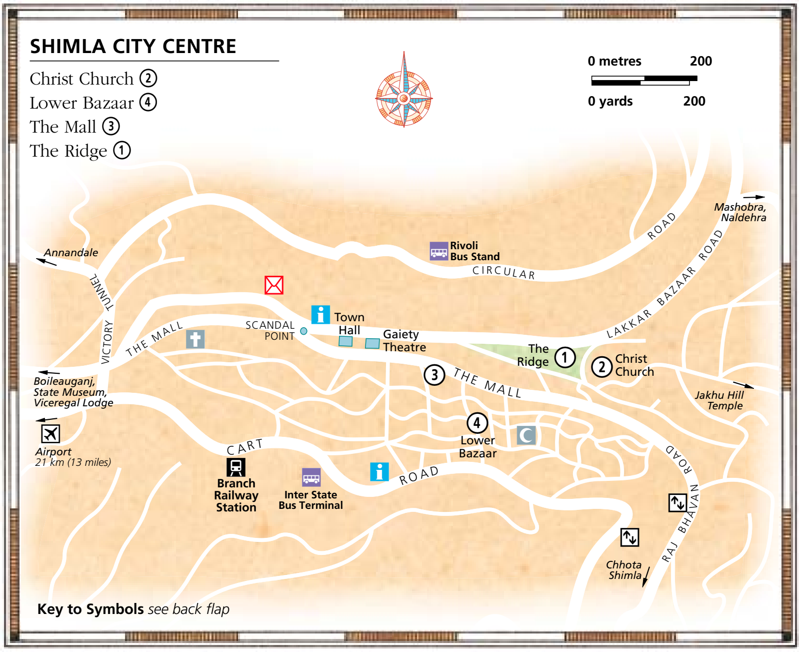
○ *daily.*

The most imposing British-built building in Shimla is the former Viceregal Lodge. Situated atop Observatory Hill, this grey stone structure in the English Renaissance style was built under the guidance of Lord Dufferin in 1888, as a suitable summer residence for the viceroys of India. Well-maintained gardens surround the stately mansion on three sides. The interior is as impressive, with two rows of balconies overlooking the magnificent teak-panelled entrance hall. A bronze plaque behind the building lists the peaks visible at a distance. It is now called Rashtrapati Niwas and houses the Indian Institute of Advanced Studies. Only the entrance hall and the gardens are open to the public.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Shimla district. 375 km (233 miles) N of Delhi. *142,200.* ✈ *21 km (13 miles) SE of Shimla.* ℹ *HP Tourism, The Mall, (0177) 265 8302. Sipi Fair (May).* **Travel permits** *are required for some areas of Himachal* (see p115). *Contact Deputy Commissioner, (0177) 265 3535.*

The stately Viceregal Lodge, set amid manicured lawns


SHIMLA CITY CENTRE
Christ Church ②
Lower Bazaar ④
The Mall ③
The Ridge ①
0 metres 200
0 yards 200
Annandale
TUNNEL
VICTORY
THE MALL
SCANDAL POINT
Town Hall
Gaiety Theatre
Rivoli Bus Stand
CIRCULAR
ROAD
LAKKAR BAZAAR ROAD
Mashobra, Naldehra
The Ridge ①
② Christ Church
③ THE MALL
Jakhu Hill Temple
Boileauganj, State Museum, Viceregal Lodge
Airport 21 km (13 miles)
CART
ROAD
Branch Railway Station
Inter State Bus Terminal
④ Lower Bazaar
RAJ BHAVAN ROAD
Chhota Shimla
Key to Symbols see back flap

Campsite at Kufri, under a heavy blanket of snow in winter

Exploring Shimla

The best way to explore Shimla is to walk along the many meandering roads and byways. Beyond the centre *(see pp110–11)*, the meadow of **Annandale** is 5 km (3 miles) north of the Ridge. During the Raj, all major social events, including races, cricket matches and fêtes, were held here. The **Glen**, another popular picnic spot, is further west and is reached by a path near the Oberoi Cecil *(see p693)*. This grand colonial structure, built on a precipice, is reminiscent of Raj-era luxury. Across the spur from here are the scenic **Chadwick Falls**. A 4-km (2.5-mile) long forest road, starting from Christ Church on the Ridge, continues along the wooded slopes of Jakhu Hill. This road winds southeast to end near one of Shimla's oldest educational institutions, St Bede's College for Women, en route overlooking the quaint bazaar of Chhota Shimla.

Deeper into the hills and along the same ridge system as Shimla, are a number of places to visit. At Charabra, 13 km (8 miles) north of Shimla, **Wildflower Hall**, the former retreat of the Commander-in-Chief, Lord Kitchner, is now a plush hotel *(see p693)*. About 10 km (6 miles) north along the old Hindustan-Tibet (HT) Road, just above the diversion to the left leading to the village of **Mashobra**, a gravel road barred by a gate to the right, indicates the entrance to the **Seog Wildlife Sanctuary** and the old Seog rest house. The sanctuary is home to local species of wildlife, including deer, hill fox and monal pheasants. At Mashobra, a steep forest pathway leads to a lovely little temple dedicated to a local goddess, set in a grove of deodars. The annual Sipi Fair is held here.

Musk deer in the Himalayan Nature Park

Continuing north from Mashobra, 3-km (2-mile) along a motor road, is the **Craignano Rest House**. Once the home of an Italian count, it commands superb views from its hilltop garden. Further north (10 km/6 miles) is **Naldehra** with a nine-hole golf course set amidst sloping meadows and fringed by deodar and blue pine. A British legacy dating from the 19th century, the golf course was designed by the viceroy, Lord Curzon. About 16 km (10 miles) east of Shimla, is the picturesque little village of **Kufri**. At an altitude of 2,650 m (8,694 ft), it is now becoming a popular venue for winter sports. Kufri's small zoo, the **Himalayan Nature Park**, counts the Himalayan black bear and the musk deer among its residents.

Naldehra's scenic golf course

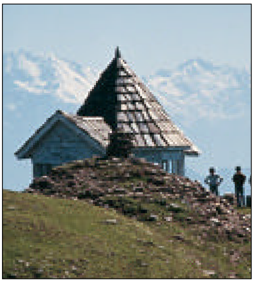
Seog Wildlife Sanctuary
For permission contact: Divisional Forest Officer, Shimla Municipal Corporation. ***Tel*** *(0177) 265 2911.* ▨

Himalayan Nature Park
Kufri. ○ *daily.* ▨

Chail ❷

Solan district. 45 km (28 miles) SE of Shimla. 🚌 ℹ *Hotel Chail Palace, (01792) 248 141.*

This tiny hill station is situated on a wooded ridge at a similar altitude to Shimla. Chail was developed as the summer capital of the Patiala maharajas *(see p102)* in the 1920s. **Chail Palace**, a stone mansion occupying a flattened hilltop, amid beautiful orchards and garden, is now a deluxe hotel *(see p692)*. The cricket pitch, near the top of a hill, is said to be the highest in the world. The Patiala rulers, enthusiastic cricketers themselves, invited the Marylebone Cricket Club (the MCC) to play here in 1933. Walks through the deodar forests of the Chail Wildlife Sanctuary, where Scottish red deer were introduced, are the best way to discover Chail's natural beauty.



A temple on Hatu Peak, a day's hike from Narkanda

Narkanda ❸

Shimla district. 64 km (40 miles) N of Shimla. 🚌

Narkanda, at a height of 2,750 m (9,022 ft), stands on the HT Road as it winds along the edges of the ridge-line dividing the Satluj and Yamuna catchments. From here, the Himalayan peaks are even closer, and the walks through dense temperate forests where spruce, fir and high-altitude oak take over from the deodar and blue pine, are quite spectacular. The best walk is the 6-km (4-mile) hike to Hatu Peak (3,300 m/10,827 ft), where the Gurkhas made one of their last stands against the British in 1815. The area around Narkanda is lush with apple orchards. In winter, the slopes are ideal for skiing.

Kasauli ❹

Solan district. 77 km (48 miles) S of Shimla. 👥 *5,000.* 🚌

The closest hill station to the plains, Kasauli offers the charm of quiet walks shaded by *chir* pine, oak and horse chestnut trees. It is at its best just after the monsoon, when colourful dahlias cover the hillsides. As an army cantonment, restrictions imposed by the authorities have prevented the old town from being taken over by concrete modern structures. As a result, old-fashioned buildings with gable roofs and wooden balconies remain intact on the **Upper** and **Lower Malls**, the two main streets that run right through the town. **Monkey Point**, the highest spot in the town, is 4 km (2.5 miles) from the bus station. From here there are clear views of Shimla, the meandering Satluj and Chandigarh. A particularly lovely trail across the hills is the 5-km (3-mile) walk to the **Lawrence School** at Sanawar, a public school founded by Sir Henry Lawrence *(see p197)* in 1847.

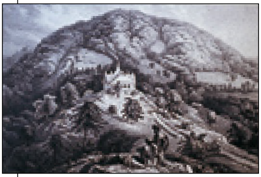
Postbox, Kasauli

Environs

About 60 km (37 miles) northeast of Kasauli is **Nalagarh**, the seat of the former princely state of Hindur. The palace is now a heritage hotel called the Nalagarh Resort *(see p693)*.

HILL STATIONS

By the late 19th century, when the British had consolidated their rule in India, families began to come over from Britain to join their menfolk. In the years that followed, more than 80 settlements were established in the lower hill ranges, as summer retreats for the burgeoning expatriate population, keen to escape the intense heat of the plains. Hill stations endeavoured to recreate a way of life reminiscent of the home country, complete with half-timbered houses, clubs, churches, hospitals, parks with bandstands and a main street invariably known as The Mall. Boarding schools, with excellent teaching facilities, were also set up for children who were unable to go back to study in England.



***Kennedy's Cottage*, by Captain J Luard, Shimla, 1822**

FESTIVALS OF HIMACHAL PRADESH

Shivratri *(Feb/Mar),* Mandi. Local deities are carried down from the surrounding hills on elaborately decorated palanquins, to pay homage to Lord Shiva at the Bhootnath Temple.

Summer Festival *(May/Jun),* Shimla and Dharamsala. This recently inaugurated festival coincides with the tourist season and attracts singers and dancers.

Minjar *(Jul/Aug),* Chamba. Maize shoots or *minjars*, strung on silken threads, are cast into the Ravi river at the start of this week-long festival to seek blessings for a bountiful harvest.

Manimahesh Yatra *(Aug/Sep),* Bharmour. The pilgrimage to the sacred Manimahesh Lake draws thousands of Hindu devotees. Its waters are believed to cleanse the sins of a lifetime.

Dussehra *(Sep/Oct),* Kullu *(see p127).*

Lavi Fair *(Nov),* Rampur. Products from remote Tibet and Ladakh were once bartered with those from the plains and lower hills at this fair. Today, woollen goods and pashmina from Tibet, *chilgoza* nuts and shawls from Kinnaur and Changmurti horses from Spiti are briskly traded.

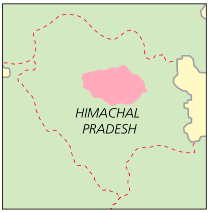
Renuka Fair *(Nov),* Nahan. People from the surrounding villages gather at the shores of the Renuka Lake to celebrate the completion of the harvest, at this fair.

Colourful Kinnauri shawls on sale at the Lavi Fair, Rampur

Trekking in Himachal Pradesh

A cone from a deodar tree

This mountainous state, with its vast variety of terrains, offers a wide range of treks from easy, one-day hikes to week-long routes. At lower altitudes, trails wind through forests of oak, deodar (*Cedrus deodara*) and pine, while steeper climbs lead to flower-strewn alpine meadows above the tree line. The towns of Manali and Dharamsala are starting points for several popular treks. The best season for trekking is during the month of June, and then later between mid-September and October, after the monsoon. During the rains (June–September), the trans-Himalayan cold deserts of Spiti *(see p130)* and Upper Kinnaur are ideal destinations, completely shielded from monsoon showers.


HIMACHAL PRADESH

LOCATOR MAP

🟥 Area shown below

0 km 20

0 miles 20

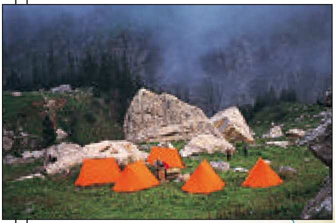
Dharamsala to Macchetar

A challenging 75-km (47-mile) route crosses rocky terrain to the meadows at Triund. A steep ascent leads to the Indrahar Pass, with views of the Pir Panjal peaks, and ends at the small town of Macchetar, connected by road to Chamba.

Duration: *5 days*

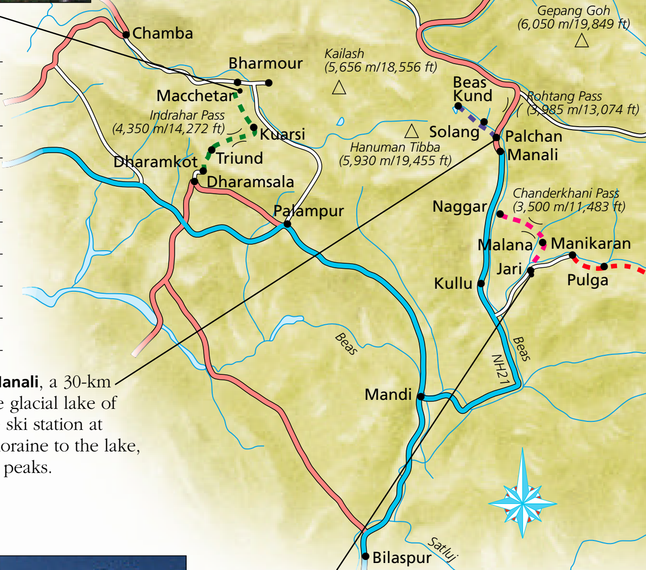
Altitude: *4,350 m (14,272 ft)*

Level of difficulty: *moderate to tough*



KEY

- ╍ The Pin Valley Trek
- ╍ Naggar to Jari
- ╍ Manali to Beas Kund
- ╍ Dharamsala to Macchetar
- ▬ National highway
- ▬ Major road
- ═ Minor road
- △ Peak
- ⌣ Pass


Chamba
Bharmour
Kailash (5,656 m/18,556 ft)
Gepang Goh (6,050 m/19,849 ft)
Macchetar
Indrahar Pass (4,350 m/14,272 ft)
Kuarsi
Beas Kund
Rohtang Pass (3,985 m/13,074 ft)
Solang
Palchan
Manali
Hanuman Tibba (5,930 m/19,455 ft)
Dharamkot
Triund
Dharamsala
Palampur
Naggar
Chanderkhani Pass (3,500 m/11,483 ft)
Malana
Manikaran
Jari
Pulga
Kullu
Beas
NH21
Beas
Mandi
Satluj
Bilaspur

Starting at Palchan near Manali, a 30-km (19-mile) round trip to the glacial lake of Beas Kund, leads past the ski station at Solang and over glacial moraine to the lake, surrounded by snow-clad peaks.

Duration: *3 days*

Altitude: *3,980 m (13,058 ft)*

Level of difficulty: *easy*

Naggar to Jari

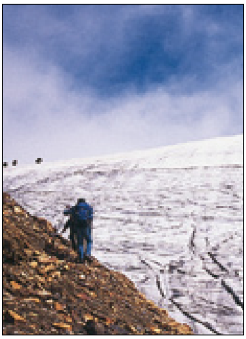
This 40-km (25-mile) trek crosses the Chandrakhani Pass, offering fine views of the peaks surrounding Solang Nala, and leads past the isolated Malana village (see p128) *to end at Jari in Parvati Valley.*

Duration: *4 days*

Altitude: *3,500 m (11,483 ft)*

Level of difficulty: *moderate*

For additional map symbols *see back flap*



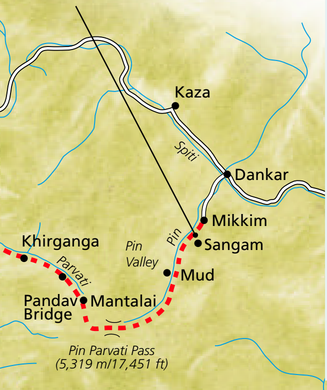
The Pin Valley Trek

Starting at Manikaran, famous for its hot springs, the 130-km (81-mile) path goes over the Pin-Parvati Pass to the cold desert region of the beautiful Pin Valley. It ends at Mikkim, 40 km (25 miles) from the main roadhead at Kaza.

Duration: *7 days*

Altitude: *5,319 m (17,451 ft)*

Level of difficulty: *tough*



PRACTICAL TIPS

Be prepared: *Acclimatization is essential for areas over 3,000 m (9,843 ft). See p767 for tips on altitude sickness. Guides are needed as maps are insufficient for safe passage across glaciers. For details on trekking see p751.*

On the trek: *Drink plenty of water. Carry a first aid kit and cooking fuel. Never burn wood, which is a scarce resource. Put out all fires properly, leaving no burning embers. Do not litter, and carry your rubbish back with you.*

Permits: *Foreign visitors require travel permits for parts of Spiti and Kinnaur, obtainable from the district or subdivisional magistrate's offices in Shimla (see p111), Rekong Peo (see p119), Kaza and Kullu (see p126). The offices at Kaza, (01906) 222 302 and Rekong Peo, (01789) 222 253 are the most efficient. For general details see p758.*

Equipment hire & operators: *The Institute of Mountaineering and Allied Sports in Manali (01902) 252 342, and Yeti Trekking in McLeodganj (01892) 221 887, organize treks. The Regional Mountaineering Centre in McLeodganj, (01892) 221 787, offers mountaineering courses. In Manali, Himalayan Adventures, (01902) 252 365, is a reputable rafting agency, the Himalayan Institute of Adventure Sports, (01902) 253 050, offers paragliding, and Himalayan Journeys, (01902) 252 365, offers mountain biking. See also p755.*

Caution: *Trekkers have gone missing in Parvati Valley. It is advisable to trek in groups and to take an experienced guide along.*

OTHER ADVENTURE ACTIVITIES

Climbing a rock face, Tirthan Valley

Himachal Pradesh has several peaks over 3,000 m (9,843 ft), suitable for climbing. The Institute of Mountaineering and Allied Sports at Manali offers three-week courses. Skiing is possible at Narkanda, Kufri and at Solang Nala near Manali. Summer is the best season for rafting and kayaking on the Beas river at Manali, and for paragliding at Solang and Billing in Kangra. Himalayan Journeys *(see p752)* in Manali offers mountain biking near the Rohtang Pass.

Renuka Lake, venue of the Renuka Fair held in November

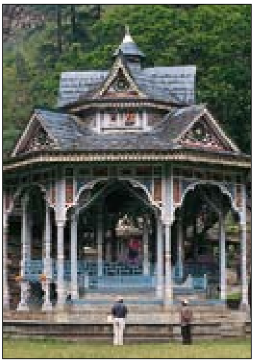
Nahan ⑤

Sirmaur district. 100 km (62 miles) S of Shimla. 🚌 🎪 *Renuka Fair (Nov).*

Lying in the lower Shivalik Hills close to the plains, Nahan nestles sleepily on a low wooded ridge at 930 m (3,051 ft). The old town retains its network of narrow cobbled streets and has an interesting bazaar dating to the 17th century. The old palace (Raja Mahal) is closed to visitors. Other attractions include the Ranzore Palace facing the Chaugan (the royal polo ground), the lively Jagannath Temple in the bazaar, and the quiet walks through the *chir* pine forests on the Villa Round. Nahan serves as a convenient stop-over for visiting the popular Renuka Lake nearby.

Environs

Lying 42 km (26 miles) east of Nahan, is the sacred **Renuka Lake**, whose shoreline traces the shape of a sleeping woman. According to Hindu mythology, Renuka was the wife of the sage Jamdagni and mother of Parasurama, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu *(see p679)*. She was killed by her son at his father's command, and miraculously came back to life, only to disappear again, leaving behind an imprint in the shape of her body. At the far end of the lake is a small wildlife park housing a pride of lions, Himalayan black bear and antelope. Nearby lies a smaller lake called Parasurama Tal, and below this, an open area where the Renuka Fair *(see p113)* is celebrated every year in November.



The pavilion in the spacious gardens of Rampur's palace

Rampur ❻

Shimla district. 130 km (81 miles) NE of Shimla. 🚌 🚆 *daily.* 🎪 *Lavi Fair (Nov).*

Once on the main trade route between India and Tibet, Rampur is today a big commercial town. It comes alive in November each year when the vibrant Lavi Fair *(see p113)* takes place.

The early 20th-century palace of the old kings is still their private residence, though visitors are allowed to walk around the sprawling gardens. A Hindu temple and a small pavilion are set in their midst.

Sarahan ❼

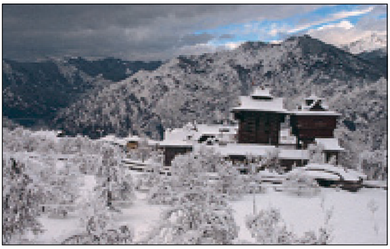
Shimla district. 198 km (123 miles) NE of Shimla. 🚌 🚆 *daily.* 🎪 *Dussehra (Sep/Oct).*

Perched high above the left bank of the Satluj, Sarahan was once the summer residence of the Rampur Bushahr kings. At 2,165 m (7,103 ft), it has a pleasant climate enhanced by the vista of the Srikhand Range across the valley, with the twin peaks of Gushu-Pishu and the holy mountain Srikhand Mahadev standing out prominently. Sarahan's most interesting sight is the spectacular tower temple, **Bhimakali**. It also has a short nature trail leading to a pheasantry. The many pheasants housed here include the monal and the near-extinct Western Himalayan tragopan.

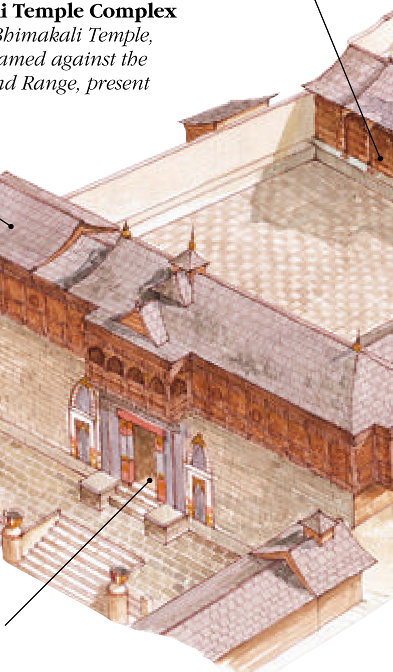
Sarahan: Bhimakali Temple

Carved tiger

The palace-cum-temple complex of the Rampur Bushahr kings, Bhimakali owes its origin to the tradition of housing the family deity on the top floor of the feudal chief's home. Its elaborate layout consists of a series of courtyards connected by beautiful gateways. The presiding deity, Bhimakali, one of the myriad forms of the goddess Kali, is housed in the first floor of the pagoda-style temple. Although the exact age of the temple is not known, it is associated with historical events dating to the 7th century, while parts of it are around 800 years old.



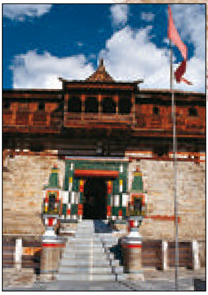
View of the Bhimakali Temple Complex
The twin towers of the Bhimakali Temple, covered in snow and framed against the backdrop of the Srikhand Range, present an awesome sight.



The Ram Mandir is located in the second courtyard.

Slate roofs

Narasimha Temple



Main Entrance
An elaborately decorated metal door, at the entrance, opens into the first courtyard.

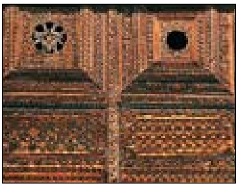
STAR FEATURES

★ Carved Balconies

★ Tower Shrines

★ Silver Doors

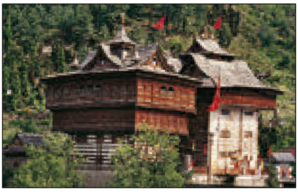
For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp692–4 and pp722–3



★ Carved Balconies
The uppermost storey of the renovated temple is fringed by overhanging balconies with exquisitely carved panels.

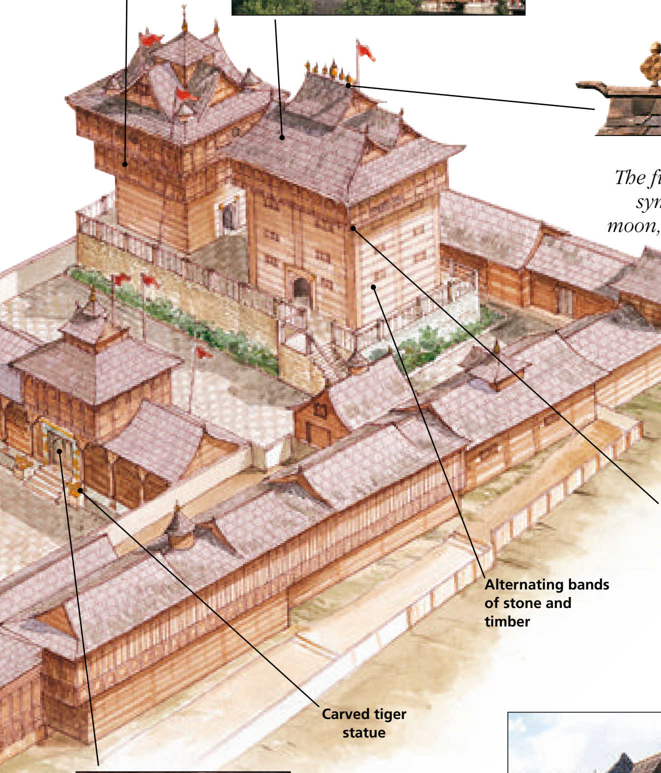
VISITORS' CHECKLIST

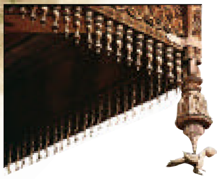
○ daily. ⊘ ⚑ Janmashtami (Jul/Aug), Dussehra (Sep/Oct). Obligatory to wear the saffron cap, available outside. Shoes and leather objects not allowed.



★ Tower Shrines
The Leaning Tower (on the right) was the main temple until it was damaged during an earthquake in 1905. The adjoining tower has since become the main shrine.

Golden Finials
The finials, a combination of symbols of the sun and the moon, represent the deity and the royal patrons.


Alternating bands of stone and timber
Carved tiger statue



Wooden Skittles
Carved wooden skittles hang from the eaves of the temple roofs.

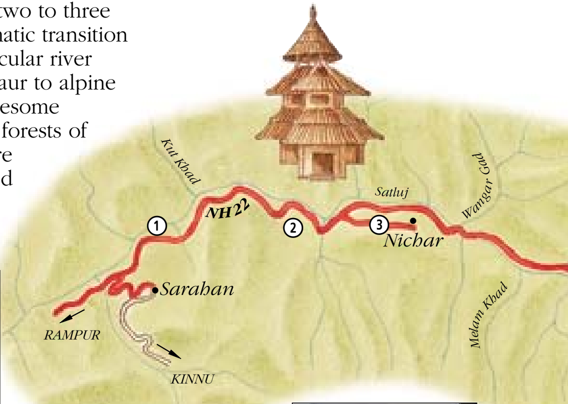
★ Silver Doors
The silver doors that lead to the second courtyard are embellished with panels depicting various Hindu gods. They were added during the reign of Padam Singh (1914–47), a Rampur Bushahr king.

Dussehra Festival
Dussehra is the only time of the year when the original 200-year-old image of Bhimakali is actively worshipped.

Sangla Valley Tour ❽

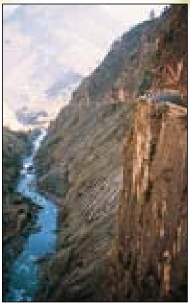
The largest village in Kinnaur, Sangla, often lends its name to the whole Baspa Valley. A drive through this area takes two to three days and encapsulates a dramatic transition in landscape, from the spectacular river gorge at the entrance to Kinnaur to alpine valley pastures. It takes in awesome mountain scenery and mixed forests of oak and rhododendron, before reaching charming slate-roofed villages that nestle amidst orchards and fields.

Temple at Sungra Maheshwar ③
The temple's pagoda-like roof and the fine wooden carvings on its doorways and walls make this an interesting stopover.



Kafour ①
Strung out along a little spur below the road, scenic Kafour is the first inhabited village in Kinnaur. The Hirma Temple, dedicated to a local mother goddess, stands out amid the slate rooftops.

The Satluj Gorge at Tranda ②
From the road there are striking views of sheer rock walls falling 500 m (1,640 ft) to the river. On the other side, cliffs of equal magnitude enclose the Satluj in a narrow impenetrable gorge.



Kinnaur ❾

Kinnaur district. 244 km (152 miles) NE from Shimla to Rekong Peo. *19,250. daily. Sazi (Jan).* **Travel permits** *are required for parts of Kinnaur. Contact the Subdivisional Magistrate's office in Rekong Peo, (01786) 222 253. For details see p115.*

Kinnaur, the remote north-eastern corner of Himachal Pradesh fringing the Tibetan Plateau, is a region of awesome grandeur. In the past, difficult terrain made Kinnaur inaccessible to all but the most intrepid of travellers, while in the 1950s, its proximity to the international border with Tibet resulted in restrictions on entry. However, these restrictions have been eased since 1992.

The variations in terrain, vegetation, climate and wildlife have broadly divided this region into Lower, Middle and Upper Kinnaur. Lower Kinnaur hugs both banks of a gorge-like Satluj river. The left bank's forested mountain slopes, contour-hugging terraced fields and tightly packed rows of houses clinging to the hillsides are picturesque in contrast to the right bank which is steeper, with higher peaks and a smaller population. Middle Kinnaur is much more rugged. Dominating its heart are the majestic heights of the Kinner Kailash Range, while to its south is the gentler valley of the Baspa, one of the Satluj's largest tributaries. The arid sweep of the Zanskar peaks makes Upper Kinnaur a cold desert country of stark, barren mountains interspersed with occasional villages and irrigated fields.

View of the Kinner Kailash on a clear winter day

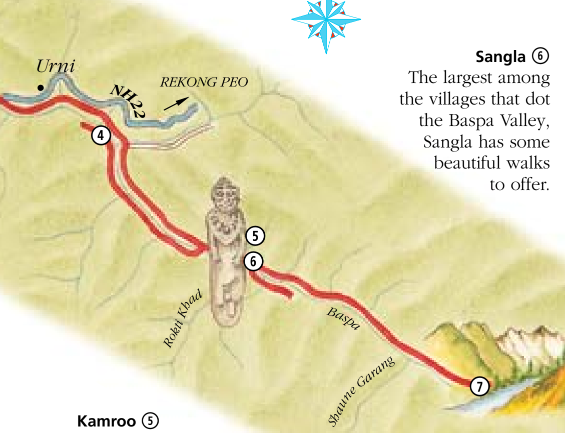
Sapni ④
Sapni village has a tower temple that contains some of the finest examples of wooden sculpture in Kinnaur.

KEY

🟥	Tour route
▨	Road
▭	River

TIPS FOR DRIVERS

Length: *90 km (56 miles).*
Getting around: *The tour begins at Kafour village. The steep road is rough and winding, and is best negotiated with a 4-wheel drive. Sangla and Chitkul villages offer places to stay and eat, as well as a few shops with basic provisions.*



Sangla ⑥
The largest among the villages that dot the Baspa Valley, Sangla has some beautiful walks to offer.

Chitkul ⑦
The tour ends at the village of Chitkul, just before the pastures of the Upper Baspa Valley. The valley's blue poppy was admired by the explorer Marco Pallis in 1933.

Kamroo ⑤
The tower of the Kamroo Narayan Temple commands a picturesque view of the valley. Fields and orchards slope down to the Baspa on one side of the river, while on the other side, thick forests rise up to pasturelands.

Rekong Peo, the new district headquarters, is a bustling little township on the right bank of the Satluj river, with some shops and adequate transport connections. About 13 km (8 miles) higher up on the same mountain is **Kalpa**, the old headquarters. With its panoramic view of the Kinner Kailash Range, Kalpa is a must in any Kinnaur itinerary. The choice of walks include one to the upland pastures through deodar and *chilgoza* pine *(Pinus gerardiana)* forests. Some old temples can be seen in the nearby Chini village.

About 20 km (12 miles) from Rekong Peo, the Baspa river joins the Satluj at its left bank. The beauty of the **Sangla Valley** (or Baspa Valley) has been extolled both in local legend and by visitors over the years, and the region lends itself to a lovely trip by road. Apart from a furious rush in its last stretch of its course, the Baspa river ambles along a wooded valley past serene villages. Stupendous gneiss faces and forests of deodar, pine and birch reaching up to long swards of pasture and snow-covered peaks surround the valley. Every village in this valley, from Sangla to Chitkul, offers glorious walks and a choice of festivals to celebrate with the local people.

Buddhism holds complete sway throughout Upper Kinnaur. Fluttering prayer flags and mud-walled Buddhist temples with clay images and wall paintings dot the region, reflecting its proximity to Tibet. Many temples are credited to the 11th-century scholar Rinchen Zangpo, revered in Tibetan Buddhism as the Lotsawa (Translator), who initiated the mammoth task of translating Indian texts into Tibetan. He was also the main force behind a great temple-building movement and supposedly built 108 monasteries in one night. **Nako**, 100 km (62 miles) from Rekong Peo, has a small lake and is close to Reo Purgyal, the highest peak in Himachal Pradesh at 6,816 m (22,362 ft).

Young Buddhist monks in a monastery, Kinnaur

A cluster of village houses with sloping roofs in Mandi

Mandi ⑩

Mandi district. 156 km (97 miles) N of Shimla. 👥 *26,900.* 🚉 *Joginder Nagar, 53 km (33 miles) NW of Mandi, then taxi or bus.* 🚌 🎉 *Shivratri (Feb/Mar).*

Often referred to as the gateway to the Kullu Valley *(see p126)*, Mandi is situated at the confluence of the Beas river with a small rain-fed tributary. The capital of the erstwhile princely state of Mandi, this small market town once functioned as a vital link between the hill communities on either side of it. The busy market located in a sunken garden in the centre of town, where all manner of merchandise is sold, is one of the more interesting sights here. Also situated in the town centre is the former residence of the Mandi kings, built in the colonial style, and now the heritage Rajmahal Palace Hotel. Several 16th- to 17th-century temples with beautiful stone carvings can be found all over the town. The most famous among these are the Madho Rai Temple, the Tarna Devi Temple and the Bhootnath Temple where the Shivratri festival is celebrated.

Environs

Rewalsar, a peaceful village at a height of 360 m (1,181 ft) is 24 km (15 miles) southeast of Mandi. On the shores of the Rewalsar Lake, resting in the hollow of a mountain spur, are a Buddhist monastery, three temples and a gurdwara commemorating the month-long stay of the tenth Sikh guru, Gobind Singh, in 1738. It is said that Padmasambhava, the 8th century Indian apostle credited with bringing Buddhism to Tibet, used his legendary powers to fly from here to Tibet. His spirit is believed to reside in the tiny floating reed islands on the lake.

Mandi's hinterland contains many other places of scenic beauty. To the east, **Jhanjheli** and **Karsog**, both about 100 km (62 miles) away in apple orchard country, offer the possibility of lovely treks to the hilltop temples of Shikari Devi and Mahunag.

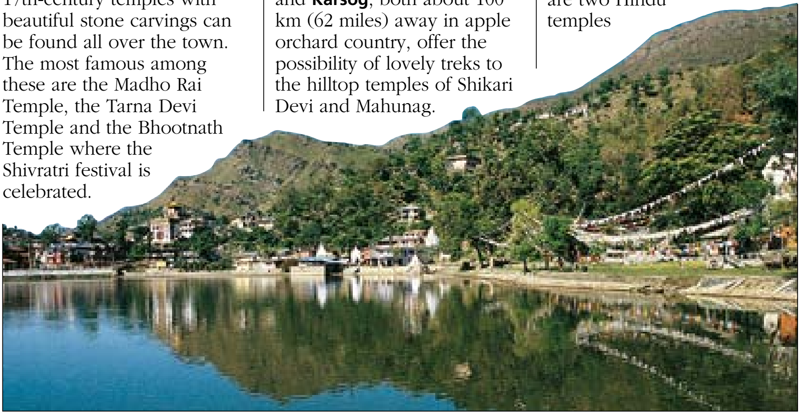
Mandi district apple orchard

Kangra Valley ⑪

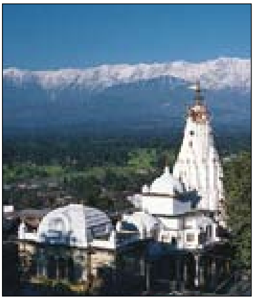
Kangra district. 222 km (728 miles) NW of Shimla. 👥 *9,200.* ✈ *Gaggal, 10 km (6 miles) N of Kangra town.* 🚉 *Joginder Nagar and Una.* 🚌

Located in the western part of Himachal Pradesh and spread between the Shivalik foothills and the Dhauladhar Range, the Kangra Valley is a land of gentle beauty. Undulating expanses of tea gardens and terraced paddy fields are crisscrossed by sparkling snow-fed rivulets. Kangra is the most populated district of Himachal Pradesh, and is well connected with the plains as it is situated along the border with Punjab.

The valley derives its name from the ancient town of Kangra, even though Dharamsala *(see p122)* is the present district headquarters. The history of the town goes back 3,500 years when it was called Nagarkot and was the capital of the kingdom of Trigartha. In 1620, Kangra and its fort were captured by Emperor Jahangir, after which it became a Mughal province. Dominating the town today are the ruins of the once formidable Kangra Fort, perched on top of a steep cliff overlooking the Banganga and Majhi rivulets. Within the fort's compound are two Hindu temples



The square-shaped Rewalsar Lake resting in the hollow of a mountain spur



The towering spire of Brajeshwari Devi Temple in Kangra town

dedicated to Ambika Devi (a local goddess) and Lakshmi Narayan, and a Jain temple with a stone image of Adinath. Behind the crowded bazaar is the Brajeshwari Devi Temple, whose fabled riches were plundered by Mahmud of Ghazni *(see p48)* in 1009. The present structure was built in 1920, after the terrible earthquake of 1905 destroyed the city and original temple.

Some 40 km (25 miles) southwest of Kangra town, are the 15 monolithic rock-cut temples of **Masroor**, dating to the 10th century and carved in a style similar to those at Ellora *(see pp476–8)*. The picturesque **Jwalamukhi Temple**, 35 km (22 miles) southwest of Kangra, is one of North India's most important pilgrimage sites.

Further east of Kangra, the beauty of the tea garden country unfolds around **Palampur**, 45 km (28 miles) away. East of Palampur, are the 9th-century stone Baijnath Temple dedicated to Shiva, Bir with its Tibetan Buddhist monastery, and Billing, well-known as a take-off point for paragliding over the valley.

About 40 km (25 miles) southeast of Palampur, is the fortress of **Sujanpur-Tira**, located on the right bank of the Beas. Built by the Kangra kings in the early 18th century, it was the favoured residence of Raja Sansar Chand, the renowned patron of Kangra miniature painting. The fortress also preserves some excellent wall paintings.

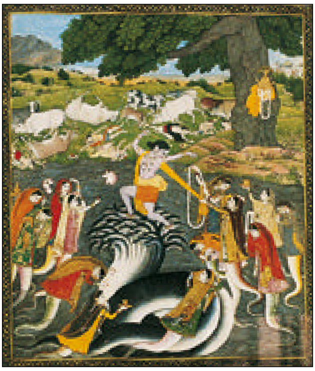
At the far end of the Kangra Valley is **Jogindernagar**, 55 km (34 miles) south of Palampur, the terminus of a narrow gauge railway line that winds up the valley from Pathankot in the west.

The **Maharana Pratap Sagar Lake**, created in 1979 by the construction of the Pong Dam across the Beas, lies to the southwest of Kangra district. This large wetland, spread over 45,000 ha (111,200 acres) when full, is a favoured stopover for migratory birds from Central Asia.

Terraced paddy fields in the Kangra Valley

PAHARI MINIATURE PAINTINGS

Pahari or "hill" painting refers to the various schools of miniature painting such as Kangra, Basohli, Mankot and Guler, that flourished between the mid-17th and the late 19th centuries in the Rajput kingdoms situated in the long, narrow region of the Himalayan foothills. Although there is evidence of painting in this region as early as 1552, the earliest group of distinctive Pahari style paintings appeared in about 1650 in the small state of Basohli. These miniatures, horizontal in format, use flat planes of bold colours, mainly reds and yellows. Stylized architecture and figures with large eyes and straight profiles wearing elaborate costumes and jewellery, are typical of these miniatures, which illustrate the *Rasamanjari*, a Sanskrit poem on the behaviour of lovers. In the 18th century, the neighbouring state, Mankot, developed an equally vibrant style, remarkable for a series of portraits of grandees of the court. By the late 18th century, the vitality of local tradition had mellowed under Mughal influence and a lyrical, more tranquil palette with a naturalistic rendering of forms characterized the miniatures from Guler and Kangra. Guler's painting tradition was dominated by one family of artists of whom the most talented was Nainsukh. Painting in Kangra flourished under the reign of Raja Sansar Chand (r.1775–1823). The highly refined style that emerged during this period concentrated on the lush, idyllic landscape as the backdrop for romantic scenes. Other centres of Pahari painting included Mandi, Jammu, Nurpur, Chamba and Kullu.



Kangra miniature,1788, depicting Krishna killing the serpent-demon, Kaliya

Dharamsala ⓬

Kangra district. 238 km (148 miles) NW of Shimla. 👥 *19,100.* ✈ *Gaggal, 11 km (7 miles) S of town centre.* 🚆 *Pathankot, 80 km (50 miles) NW of Dharamsala, then bus or taxi.* 🚌 ℹ *HP Tourism, McLeodganj (01892) 221 205.* 🛒 *daily.* 🎉 *Summer Festival (May), Bodh Festival (Oct/Nov).*

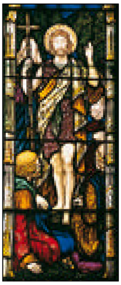
This hill station, established by the British in the mid-19th century, is today the home of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Government-in-Exile. Located on the lower spurs of the Dhauladhar Range, the town consists of two sections – the lower town with the main bus stand and bazaar, and the upper town, known as **McLeodganj**, 9 km (5 miles) to its north, which is the destination of most foreign visitors. There is little of interest in the lower town, apart from the lively **Kotwali Bazaar** and the **Museum of Kangra Art**. The museum has an excellent collection of Kangra miniatures *(see p121)*, and also houses a school which teaches the art of miniature painting.

Tibetan nuns in their red robes, a common sight in Dharamsala

McLeodganj, the upper town, named after David McLeod, the lieutenant governor of Punjab in 1848, is primarily a Tibetan settlement. Its focal point is the **Tsuglagkhang Complex**, located at the southern edge of the town, which contains the residence of the Dalai Lama (not open to visitors), the **Namgyal Monastery** where monks can be seen debating in the afternoons, and the important **Tsuglagkhang Temple**. A simple hall, painted in yellow, the temple has a raised dais from where the Dalai Lama holds discourses, and three beautiful images from the Buddhist pantheon – Sakyamuni (the Historical Buddha), Avalokitesvara *(see p141)*, and Padmasambhava *(see p120 & p139)*. The Dalai Lama is believed to be an incarnation of Avalokitesvara. Another temple in the complex has an intricate mural of the Kalachakra ("Wheel of Time") and beautiful sand mandalas, painstakingly created by the monks over a period of time and then ritually destroyed.

Situated at the northern edge of town are the **Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts**, and the beautiful **Norbulingka Institute**, where traditional arts and crafts are promoted.

Gangchen Kyishong, the administrative centre of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile, is midway between the upper and lower towns. This complex includes the excellent **Library of Tibetan Works and Archives**, a museum on the first floor with bronze images and *thangkas*, as well as the **Institute of Tibetan Medicine**. Nearby is the **Nechung Monastery**, the seat of the Tibetan State Oracle, whose predictions about major events in the coming year carry great weight in the Tibetan community. Also on the road to Kotwali Bazaar, just below McLeodganj, is the picturesque **Church of St-John-in-the-Wilderness**, a grey stone structure built in 1852. Brass plaques and superb Belgian stained-glass windows can be seen inside the church. The tomb of Lord Elgin, the British viceroy who died here in 1863 while on holiday, lies in the churchyard.



Stained glass, St-John-in-the-Wilderness

The brightly-painted façade of Namgyal Monastery, McLeodganj

🏛 Museum of Kangra Art
Main Rd, Dharamsala. ***Tel*** *(01892) 224 214.* ○ *Tue–Sun.*

🏛 Library of Tibetan Works and Archives
Gangchen Kyishong, McLeodganj Rd. ○ *Mon–Fri.*

⛪ St-John-in-the-Wilderness
○ *daily.* ✝ *11am Sun.*

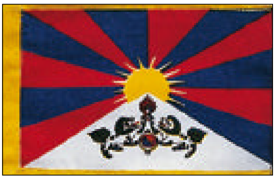
Environs

The pretty village of **Dharamkot**, north of McLeodganj, is reached by a 3-km (2-mile) long road, lined with deodar and oak trees. There are superb views of the Kangra Valley from the village.

Little Tibet

When the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, fled Tibet in 1959 after the Chinese occupation, Dharamsala became his new home, and the base of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile. The town is today often called Little Tibet, preserving Tibet's religious and cultural heritage, keeping the Tibetan cause alive internationally, and serving as the focal point for the 100,000 Tibetans scattered in refugee settlements all over India. Dharamsala also attracts Buddhists from across the world, such as the Hollywood actor Richard Gere.

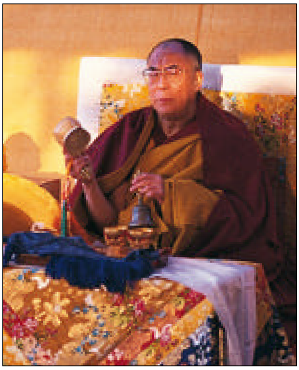
Butter lamp



The Tibetan flag *is dominated by a snow-covered mountain representing Tibet. The six red bands symbolize the six Tibetan tribes.*

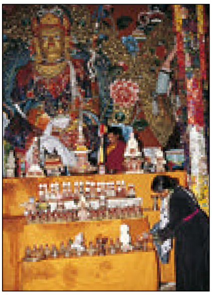
RELIGION AND CULTURE

Dharamsala's many monasteries and crafts centres, and its performing arts school, ensure that Tibet's distinctive religion and culture continue to flourish.



The Dalai Lama, *who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1990, is head of the Gelugpa or Yellow Hat sect* (see p139) *and is revered as Tibet's god-king.*

Tibetan opera, *known as* lhamo, *has traditional folk tales, legends and myths as its themes.*



The altar *in a Tibetan monastery includes, apart from images of the deities, seven ritual bowls of water, butter lamps, intricate butter sculptures, as well as a bell and a thunderbolt sceptre used during prayers and special rites.*

Butter sculpture

Thunderbolt sceptre

Prayer bell

Sand mandalas *symbolizing the universe are meticulously created and then ceremonially destroyed. They help monks to meditate.*

Thangkas, *or scroll paintings framed in silk depicting Buddhist divinities, are among the traditional arts kept alive by the refugees.*

See also features on Buddhist Iconography *(p141)* and In the Buddha's Footsteps *(p221)*.

Sylverton, one of the many colonial houses in Dalhousie

Dalhousie ⑬

Chamba district. 336 km (209 miles) NW of Shimla. 👥 *7,400.* 🚌 ℹ *Geetanjali Hotel, near bus stand, (01899) 242 136.* ⊖ *daily.* 🎪 *Summer Festival (Jun).*

Sprawling over five hills that range in height from 1,525 m to 2,378 m (5,003 ft to 7,802 ft), Dalhousie still retains its Raj-era ambience, with spacious, gable-roofed bungalows and churches flanking its leafy lanes. Originally conceived as a sanatorium for the expatriate population rather than as a fashionable summer retreat, it was founded in 1853 and named after Lord Dalhousie, the governor-general of British India between 1854 and 1856. The most popular walks are the twin rounds of **Garam Sarak** ("Warm Road") and **Thandi Sarak** ("Cold Road"), so called because one path is sunnier than the other. A shorter walk from the Circuit House to Gandhi Chowk – the central part of town where a school, church and the post office are situated – offers spectacular views of the Pir Panjal Range. From Gandhi Chowk, another pleasant ramble, about 3 km (2 miles) long, leads south to the pretty picnic spot of Panjpula or "Five Bridges".

For Raj aficionados, a track leading off to the right from the main bus stand moves past the old British cemetery in the woods, before reaching the cantonment. One of the two churches here boasts pretty stained-glass windows and sandstone arches.

Environs

A scenic road through dense forests of pine, deodar, oak, horse chestnut and rhododendron leads to the **Kalatope Wildlife Sanctuary**, about 8 km (5 miles) east of Dalhousie. With prior permission from the wildlife authorities at Chamba it is possible to take a diversion at Bakrota and drive to a rest house deep inside the sanctuary. About 26 km (16 miles) east of Dalhousie is **Khajjiar**, situated at a height of 2,000 m (6,562 ft). This saucer-shaped expanse of green meadow, bordered by towering deodars, has a picture postcard beauty, comparable with the finest views in Kashmir or Switzerland. In the centre is a small lake with a golden-domed Devi temple built on a floating island.

🦌 Kalatope Wildlife Sanctuary
For permission contact: Forest Department, Chamba. ***Tel*** *(01899) 222 639.*

Chamba ⑭

Chamba district. 378 km (235 miles) NW of Shimla. 👥 *20,300.* 🚌 ⊖ *daily.* 🎪 *Sui (Apr), Minjar (Jul/Aug).* **Travel permits** *Contact the Deputy Commissioner, (01899) 225 371. For details see p758.*

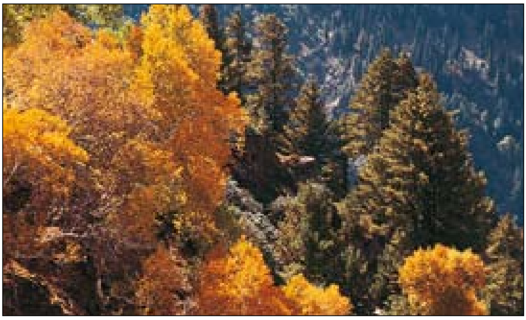
This town was chosen as the capital of the former princely state of Chamba in the 10th century, when Raja Sahil Varman moved here from Bharmour. He named it Chamba after his favourite daughter, Champavati, who legend says, sacrificed herself to provide water for the parched city. During the Sui festival, women and children sing her praises in the town's many temples.

A bridge over the Ravi river leads up to the town, situated on the ledge of a mountain, overlooking the right bank of the river. In the town's centre is the **Chaugan**, a huge expanse of meadow, that is the focal point of all cultural and social life. Clustered around it are a number of imposing buildings, including the old **Akhand Chandi Palace**, part of which is now a college. The Chaugan is also the main marketplace with shops that sell a variety of merchandise, ranging from traditional silver jewellery with enamelled clasps to embroidered Chamba *chappals* (sandals) that may look flimsy but are excellent for walking up hillsides.

Silver mask of Parvati, Chamba

Chamba's towering stone temples are some of the finest in the region. The most

Images of deities on the walls of Lakshmi Narayan Temple, Chamba



Hillsides around Chamba ablaze with the colours of autumn

important are the six North Indian *shikhara*-style temples *(see p20)* that comprise the **Lakshmi Narayan Temple** complex, to the west of the Chaugan. Of these, three are dedicated to Vishnu and three to Shiva. The white marble image of Lakshmi Narayan, in the main temple, was brought from Central India in the 10th century. The carved panels on the temple walls illustrate mythological scenes as well as animal and floral motifs.

Other temples include the **Madho Rai Temple**, near the palace, with a bronze image of Krishna, and further up, the **Chamunda Temple**.

A glimpse of Chamba's rich heritage can be seen at the **Bhuri Singh Museum**, set up in 1908 by the king of Chamba at the time. His rare collection of miniature paintings formed the nucleus of the museum. Today, it has a fine collection of Pahari paintings *(see p121)*, murals, inscribed fountain slabs, carved stone panels and other artifacts, such as Chamba *rumals*, metal masks, copper plates and silver jewellery.

Bhuri Singh Museum
S of Chaughan. ***Tel*** *(01899) 222 590.* ○ *Tue–Sun.*

Bharmour ⑮

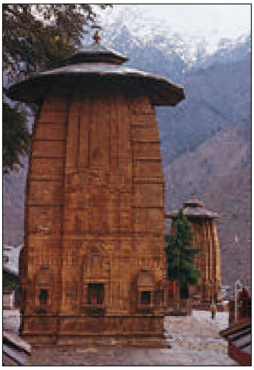
Chamba district. 64 km (40 miles) SE of Chamba. 🚌 🎉 *Manimahesh Yatra (Aug/Sep).*

The Bharmour region, homeland of the semi-nomadic, sheep-herding Gaddis and the first capital of the Chamba rulers, spreads across a steep mountainside, high above Budhil, a large tributary of the Ravi river. Bharmour's main attraction is the fascinating **Chaurasi** (literally, "Eighty-Four") **Temple** complex, built in the 10th century under Raja Sahil Varman, to honour the 84 saints who visited Bharmour. The major shrines are dedicated to Narasimha, Ganesha, and the local deities Larkana Devi and Manimahesh. The intricate wooden carvings on the temple lintels and the images of the main deities are outstanding, and it is said that the sculptor's hands were cut off to prevent him from replicating such remarkable work.

Environs

Situated at a height of 3,950 m (12,959 ft), **Manimahesh Lake**, 35 km (22 miles) from Bharmour, is the area's most sacred lake, as its holy waters are believed to cleanse all sins. In August/September, thousands of pilgrims converge here to participate in the annual Manimahesh Yatra *(see p113)*. The main motor road continues up to Hadsar, 16 km (10 miles) beyond Bharmour, and from there the *yatra* (procession) ascends in two stages via Dhanchho to the lake, nestling at the base of the Manimahesh Kailasa.

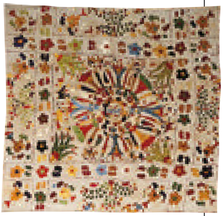
For the adventurous, Bharmour also offers a tough five-day trek over the Kugti Pass (5,040 m/16,535 ft) to Lahaul *(see p129)*. Holi, 26 km (16 miles) away in the main Ravi Valley, is the base for a number of trails over the Dhauladhar Range to the Kangra Valley. It offers the option of a longer walk to the Kullu Valley as well. Down the course of the Ravi, on the road to Chamba, the **Chatrari Temple** with its exquisite bronze image of Shakti Devi, is also worth a stop.



Well-preserved 10th-century temples at Bharmour

CHAMBA RUMALS

Chamba *rumals*, exquisitely embroidered handkerchiefs or coverlets, generally square in shape, were used primarily to wrap gifts, either for temple offerings or for ceremonial exchanges during wedding rituals. At times, they also formed the canopies draped above deities in temples. Pale colours, silk thread, a double-sided satin stitch and an unbleached muslin base were the framework within which intricate compositions, inspired by delicate Pahari miniatures, were created. Originally the work of the ladies of the court, the themes were religious, interspersed with animal and plant motifs, and enclosed within floral borders.



Hand-embroidered Chamba *rumal*

Brightly coloured tiger guarding the Jagannathi Devi Temple, Kullu

Kullu Valley ⑯

Kullu district. 240 km (149 miles) N of Shimla. *18,300.* *Bhuntar, 10 km (6 miles) S of Kullu town.* *HP Tourism, near Maidan, (01902) 222 349.* *Dussehra (Sep/Oct).* **Travel permits** *Contact Deputy Commisioner, (01902) 222 727. For more details see p115.*

Typical geometric pattern on the border of a Kullu shawl

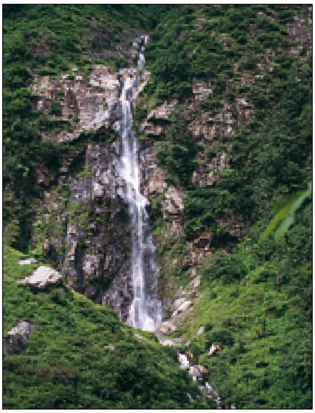
The Kullu Valley in central Himachal Pradesh, watered by the Beas river, has long been a site of human habitation. In ancient Sanskrit texts it is referred to as Kulantapith, or "end of the habitable world" – an apt description when one compares the lush fields and apple orchards of this 80-km (50-mile) long valley with the desolate expanse of Lahaul *(see p129)*, which is separated from it by the Pir Panjal Range. The local name for Kullu is the "Valley of the Gods" – its alpine setting is the gathering place for 360 gods from different temples in the region, who congregate here for the famous Dussehra festival.

Unlike British-built hill stations in the Himalayas, Kullu remained unknown to the outside world until it was "discovered" in the 1960s by the flower children, who were enchanted as much by its hillsides covered with marijuana plants *(Cannabis sativa)*, as by its gentle beauty, superb mountain vistas and amiable people. The men of Kullu Valley usually wear the distinctive Kullu *topi*, a snug woollen cap with a colourful upturned flap. The women weave thick shawls with striking geometric designs on their borders, and few visitors can resist acquiring these attractive products, now a flourishing local industry. Equally attractive are the village houses, their slate roofs rising above green meadows. **Kullu**, the district headquarters and the largest settlement in the valley, is located on the right bank of the Beas. The town's chief attraction is the 17th-century **Raghunath Temple**, dedicated to Rama and Sita, whose richly adorned images lead the processions at the Dussehra festival. Also worth exploring is the Akhara Bazaar, at the northern end of the town, famous for its handicrafts shops, selling shawls and traditional silver jewellery. At the southern end of town is the large green open space called **Dhalpur Maidan**, where the colourful Dussehra festivities take place.

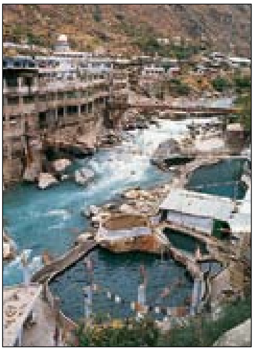
A number of temples, all with superb stone carvings and impressive images, lie in the vicinity of Kullu town – the **Vaishno Devi Cave Shrine** is 4 km (2.5 miles) to the northeast; the **Jagannathi Devi Temple** at Bekhli, 5 km (3 miles) to the north; and the **Vishnu Temple** at Dayar, 12 km (8 miles) to the west. The huge, pyramidal **Basheshwar Mahadev Temple** at Bajaura, 15 km (9 miles) to the south, has superb images of Vishnu, Ganesha and Durga. However, the most famous is the **Bijli Mahadev Temple**, dedicated to the "Lord of Lightning", 14 km (9 miles) to the southeast. Located on a high spur on the left bank of the river, opposite the town, this temple has an 18-m (59-ft) high staff, which periodically attracts lightning during thunderstorms especially in the monsoon. This is regarded as a divine blessing, even though it shatters the Shivalinga in the sanctum of the temple. The stone fragments are then painstakingly put together again with a mortar of clarified butter and grain, by the head priest.

Environs

Jalori Pass, about 70 km (44 miles) south of Kullu, on the ridgeline forming the divide between the Beas and Satluj rivers, offers two beautiful walks through dense, high-altitude oak forests and meadows. The first walk goes through a path with gentle gradients to the tarn of Saryolsar, 5 km (3 miles) away. The other walk, up a neighbouring hill, leads to the picturesque ruins of a fort occupied by the Gurkhas in the 19th century.



A waterfall in Kullu Valley


Hot springs in Manikaran, a popular pilgrim spot

Parvati Valley ⑰

Kullu district. 180 km (112 miles) NE of Shimla (via Jalori Pass). 🚌
ℹ *HP Tourism, near Maidan, Kullu, (01902) 222 349.*

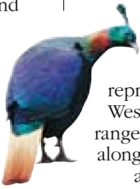
The scenic Parvati Valley, with its green, terraced rice fields and apple orchards, draws an increasing number of visitors. However, because of illegal marijuana cultivation in the surrounding countryside, the Parvati Valley has, in recent years, gained notoriety as a centre for the narcotics trade, and several foreign visitors have gone missing from the area. It is advisable to take guides and porters available from Naggar *(see p128)* and **Manikaran**, for treks in this region.

The main settlement in the Parvati Valley is Manikaran, famous for its hot springs. It is also the starting point for a number of treks *(see pp114–15)*. An interesting legend explains the origins of the hot springs. A serpent stole the earrings of Parvati, the consort of Lord Shiva, and disappeared with them into a deep burrow. On witnessing Shiva's terrible anger, the snake was too terrified to come out of its hole, but managed to snort the earrings out through the earth, thus creating vents from which the hot springs bubble out. A bath here is said to be good for the body and the soul, and local people sometimes boil rice in the geo-thermal steam. The Rama Temple and the Shiva Temple next to a Sikh gurdwara is always thronged with sadhus.

Great Himalayan National Park ⑱

Kullu district. 205 km (127 miles) N of Shimla, (via Jalori Pass). **Entry points**: *Saing, Gushani.* 🚌 *Shamchi, 15 km (9 miles) S of Kullu, then jeep.* ℹ *For bookings & permits contact Director, GHNP, Shamchi, (01902) 265 320.*

The great Himalayan National Park, covering an area of 754 sq km (291 sq miles), ranges in altitude from 1,300 m (4,265 ft) to 6,100 m (20,013 ft), and abuts the cold desert region of Pin Valley National Park *(see p130)*. The variety of flora and fauna found here represents the entire Western Himalayas. A vast range of subtropical species along with alpine grasslands are covered with edelweiss and oak forests. Mammals include the Himalayan tahr, musk deer and the elusive snow leopard. Among the 300-odd species of birds, there are at least six kinds of pheasant.


Monal pheasant

A number of trekking trails and forest huts in the buffer zone offers an opportunity to explore the park.

GATHERING OF THE GODS

Kullu celebrates the festival of Dussehra with unique gusto. All over India, this festival commemorates the defeat of the demon-king, Ravana, by the god Rama, a story recounted in the Hindu epic, *Ramayana (see p27)*. In Kullu, local traditions add their own piquancy to this pan-Indian myth. These traditions originated in the 17th century, when the ruler, Jagat Singh, inadvertently caused the death of a Brahmin priest. To expiate his sin, he installed the deity Raghunath (an incarnation of Rama), on his throne and vowed that thereafter he and his descendants would rule Kullu only as regents. The image of this god was brought all the way from the holy town of Ayodhya *(see p199)*, the birthplace of Lord Rama. From then on, every September/October, Raghunath "invites" all the local gods of the valley, to celebrate Dussehra in Kullu. These gods, 360 of them, include Hadimba, the patron deity of the Kullu rajas from Manali *(see p128)*, and Jamlu, the reigning deity of Malana who administers justice via the village priest. The gods are carried on palanquins from their own temples and arrive at the Dhalpur Maidan in a cheerful procession accompanied by the frenzied beat of drums. Nine days of festivities follow, when a temporary market is set up, which sells everything from locally-made shawls and shoes, to brightly-hued plastic toys. The graceful *natti* dance, performed amidst a lot of friendly rivalry by several local groups, can also be watched.

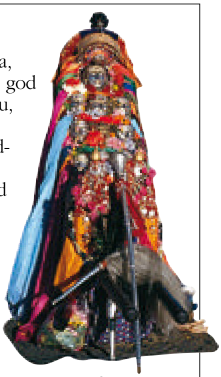


Image of Vashishtha Devta, a local god

Preparing for the Dussehra festival celebrations

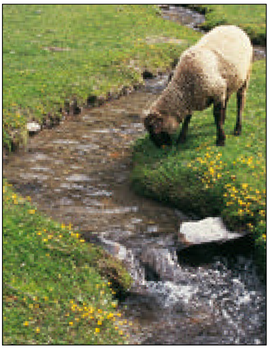
Manali ⑲

Kullu district. 281 km (175 miles) N of Shimla. 👥 *6,300.* 🚌 ℹ *The Mall, (01902) 253 531.* ⊖ *daily.* 🎉 *Winter Carnival (Jan), Dhungri Mela (May).*

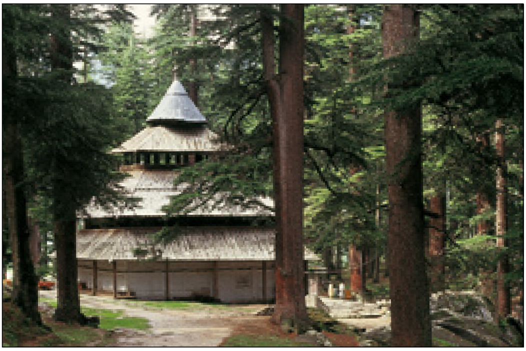
Picturesque Manali, situated along the west bank of the Beas river, is a prime destination for visitors, offering a variety of scenic walks and treks through dense forests. Though a profusion of hotels and shops in recent years has overrun downtown Manali, its environs still retain much of the natural beauty that gives this hill station a unique flavour. Particularly charming is the original village, about 3 km (2 miles) north of the main bazaar, with its temple dedicated to Manu, the Hindu sage after whom Manali is named.

Located 1.5 km (1 mile) north of the main bazaar is the sacred **Hadimba Temple**, shaded by a grove of stately deodars. This four-tiered wooden temple with its pagoda-style roof was built in 1553 around a small natural cave enshrining the footprints of the demoness Hadimba, wife of Bhima, the mighty Pandava brother *(see p26)*.

On the left bank of the Beas, about 3 km (2 miles) north of the bazaar, the hot sulphur springs in the village of **Vashisht** are piped into Turkish-style baths. Further up, the lovely **Solang Valley**, 14 km (9 miles) from downtown Manali, is the scene of most of the area's outdoor activities. Treks lead up to the pastures of Dhumti and the small snow-fed lake of Beas Kund *(see p114)*. Paragliding, a popular activity, takes place on the nearby slopes, which also attract skiers in the winter.



A tiny stream crisscrossing the lush landscape around Manali

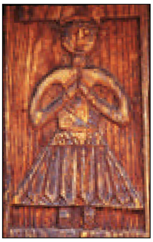


The 16th-century wooden Hadimba Temple in Manali

Environs

Rohtang Pass, the perilous pass crossing into Lahaul, at an altitude of 3,980 m (13,058 ft), is 52 km (32 miles) north of Manali. It is a day's excursion, possible only in summer, with a brief halt at the spectacular Rahalla Falls along the way.

The first capital of the Kullu kings, **Jagatsukh** is 6 km (4 miles) south of Manali, on the left bank of the Beas. The two *shikhara*-style *(see p21)* stone temples here possibly date back to the 6th century. **Naggar**, further south, on the same side of the river, succeeded Jagatsukh as the capital till it was moved to Kullu *(see p126)* in the 17th century. The Naggar Castle, built in the 15th century, is now a hotel. It is an excellent example of traditional local architecture with walls composed of alternate layers of wooden beams and evenly hewn stone. It commands a fine view of the Beas Valley. Nearby is the **Roerich Art Gallery** displaying the work of the Russian painter Nicholas Roerich. Lying across the river from Naggar, is scenic **Katrain**, surrounded by orchards. Trout fishing is a popular pastime here. The remote village of **Malana**, beyond Chanderkhani Pass, is 25 km (16 miles) southeast of Naggar. Malana's isolated people live by their own code of conduct and shun contact with outsiders. Their unique culture, language and system of government set them apart from the rest of the valley. Visitors should enter the village only if invited.

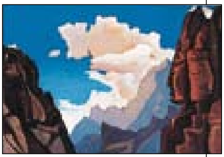


Woodcarving on a door in Malana

🏛 Roerich Art Gallery
Naggar. ○ *daily.* 📷

NICHOLAS ROERICH (1874–1947)

This multi-faceted Russian who painted, wrote poetry and expounded a universalist philosophy distilled from many religions, travelled extensively through Tibet and the Himalayas. He is best remembered for the colourful celebration of nature in his trans-Himalayan landscapes. Roerich lived in Naggar where he died in 1947. His old home is now the Roerich Museum. His son Svyatoslav, also a painter, made India his home as well.



A mountainscape by Roerich

Lahaul and Spiti ⑳

Lahaul and Spiti district. 610 km (379 miles) N from Shimla to Keylong via Kunjam Pass. *33,200.*
Ladarcha Festival, Spiti (Aug).

At an altitude of 2,750 m (9,022 ft), Lahaul and Spiti, bordering Tibet and Ladakh's Zanskar Valley, comprise the trans-Himalayan regions of western Himachal Pradesh. Unlike the lush meadows of the Kullu Valley, this is a barren land of rocky massifs and hanging glaciers, enclosed by the Himalayas to the north and the Pir Panjal to the south. Rainfall is scarce and the region is dependent upon glacial melt for the cultivation of its main crops, barley, millet and seed potato.

While the difficult terrain inhibits many travellers from going to Spiti *(see pp130–31)*, Lahaul is more accessible. Upper Lahaul is a stark land of high mountains enveloping the deep valleys of the Chandra and Bhaga rivers, while Lower Lahaul lies below Tandi, where the two rivers meet and become the Chandrabhaga, or Chenab.

Today, Lahaul's social structure is an interesting mix of Buddhism and Hinduism, reflecting the close ties the region had with Tibet, Ladakh and neighbouring Kullu.

Keylong, the district headquarters on the Bhaga river, is the region's principal town. With many basic facilities, it is widely used as a stopover by travellers en route to Leh *(see pp136–7)* or as a base for treks. Across the river, opposite Keylong, a steep tree-shaded pathway leads to **Drugpa Kardang Gompa**, the largest monastery *(gompa)* in Lahaul. It has a fine collection of *thangkas (see p123)*, musical instruments and old weapons. Nearby is the 16th-century **Shashur Gompa**. This monastery is renowned for its long 4.5 m (15 ft) *thangka*.

On the road to Manali, about 16 km (10 miles) south of Keylong, the eight-storeyed tower of the Gondhla chiefs dominates the landscape. The oldest monastery in Lahaul, the 800-year-old **Guru Ghantal Gompa** at Tandi, 11 km (7 miles) southwest of Keylong, is believed to have been established by Guru Padmasambhava, the founder of Tibetan Buddhism. Other places worth visiting are the carved wooden Mrikula Devi Temple at **Udaipur**, in the Pattan Valley, 44 km (27 miles) west of Tandi, and **Trilokinath**, with its marble image of Avalokitesvara *(see p141)*.

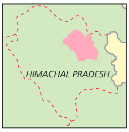
The meandering Chenab river, near Gondhla village

Detail of a prayer wheel at Keylong

Beyond Keylong, the road to Leh passes the last Lahaul village of **Darcha** with a trekking route to Zanskar *(see p152)* via the Shingo-la.

Suraj Tal, the glacial lake that is the source of Bhaga river, one of the main rivers in Lahaul

Spiti: The Sacred Valley

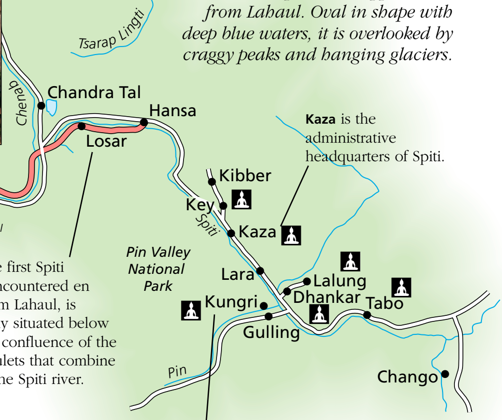


The heart of Himachal's cold desert, Spiti is a land of fascinating contrasts. Monasteries and prayer flags are dotted along the banks of glacial streams, while blue sheep and ibex graze amidst sparse pastures sprinkled with marine fossils. Once part of a West Tibetan kingdom, Spiti submitted to Ladakhi rule in the 17th century and became a part of British India in the 19th century. Through these changes in its political history, Spiti remained a locked land, enclosed between tall mountain ranges and international borders. Though now part of Himachal Pradesh, it has retained its Tibetan character and is an important preserve of ancient Buddhist heritage.

Bare multi-hued rock faces, a typical feature of the Spiti area

Chandra Tal, *or the "Moon Lake", at a height of 4,270 m (14,009 ft), lies at the entrance to Spiti when approached from Lahaul. Oval in shape with deep blue waters, it is overlooked by craggy peaks and hanging glaciers.*

Key Monastery, *possibly founded in the 13th century, is the largest monastery in Spiti. Perched on an escarpment, it has a fine collection of* thangkas *and is the seat of Lochen Tulku, a reincarnation of Rinchen Zangpo* (see p119).



Kaza is the administrative headquarters of Spiti.

Losar, the first Spiti village encountered en route from Lahaul, is beautifully situated below the wide confluence of the three rivulets that combine to form the Spiti river.

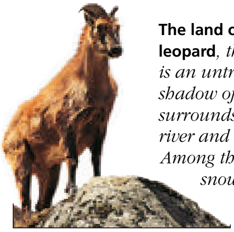
Kungri Monastery in Pin Valley belongs to the Nyingmapa sect *(see p139)*. The uppermost hall, in the main temple, contains some ancient wall paintings and wooden sculptures.

KEY

- 🟥 Area illustrated
- ☸ Monastery
- ▬ Major road
- ═ Minor road

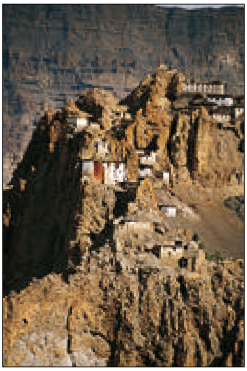
0 km 25

0 miles 25



The land of the ibex and the snow leopard, *the Pin Valley National Park is an untrammelled pastureland in the shadow of virgin snowcapped peaks. It surrounds the upper reaches of the Pin river and its tributary, the Paraiho. Among the carnivores, the fox and the snow wolf are common, while the beautiful snow leopard is more elusive.*

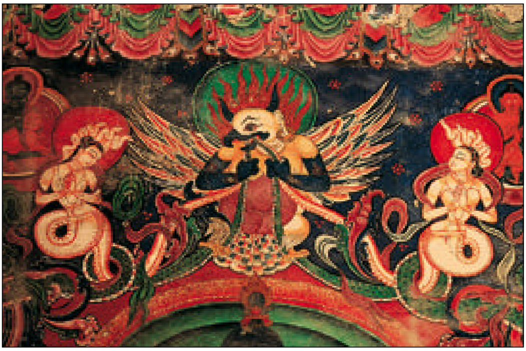
***Chorten* at a village in Pin Valley**



Dhankar, *the old capital of Spiti, is wedged between the pinnacles of a razor sharp spur of crumbling rock and alkaline deposits. The old monastery here is richly endowed with beautiful frescoes, and a bronze statue of Avalokitesvara.*

Children in Spiti

An impressive image of Guru Padmasambhava, *covered in gold leaf, is the highlight of Lalung Monastery. This monastery is one of the 108 structures credited to Rinchen Zangpo.*



Vibrant mural showing a scene from Buddhist mythology, Tabo Monastery

Tabo Monastery ㉑

Lahaul and Spiti district. 460 km (286 miles) NE of Shimla. 🚌 ○ *Apr–Sep.* ⚑ *Monastery Festival (Oct/Nov).* **Travel permits** *required to travel between Tabo and Jangi (in Kinnaur). Contact Deputy Commisioner, Shimla* (see p111)*, or SDM's office in Rekong Peo* (see p118)*. For details see p115.*

Tabo Monastery, Spiti's pride, is linked to an important era in the growth of Buddhism in Tibet. Tibetan Buddhism suffered a major setback during the reign of King Langdarma in the 9th century, and it took a whole century for the religion to recover. The resurgence, also known as the "second diffusion of Buddhism", was spearheaded by Ye-she-od, the Lama king of Guge in Western Tibet. Under his patronage, the legendary scholar Rinchen Zangpo spread the faith by translating Buddhist texts and promoting a tremendous temple-building movement.

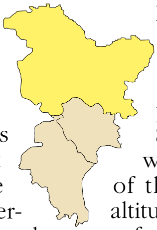
The *gompa* at Tabo is one of the products of this movement, established in the 11th century by Rinchen Zangpo himself. Dating from a period when monastic temples were constructed close to villages, it is one of the largest of such centres. The squat, mud structures of Tabo are enclosed within a mud wall about 84 m by 75 m (276 ft by 246 ft) and appear quite unimpressive from the outside. The exquisite wall paintings inside, however, make Tabo one of the most significant art treasures of the Tibetan Buddhist world. The earliest paintings in the *dukhang* (assembly hall) are from the 10th and 11th centuries and depict scenes from various incidents and tales associated with the life of the Buddha. The hall also contains imposing clay sculptures of the chief deities from the Buddhist pantheon. Seven other chapels in the complex contain paintings from the 15th and 16th centuries. One of the shrines houses a huge clay idol of a sitting Maitreya (the Future Buddha). Tabo is also a favourite retreat of the Dalai Lama.

Accessing parts of the Spiti Valley that lie below Tabo remains difficult. Travel is restricted due to the proximity of the border with Tibet.

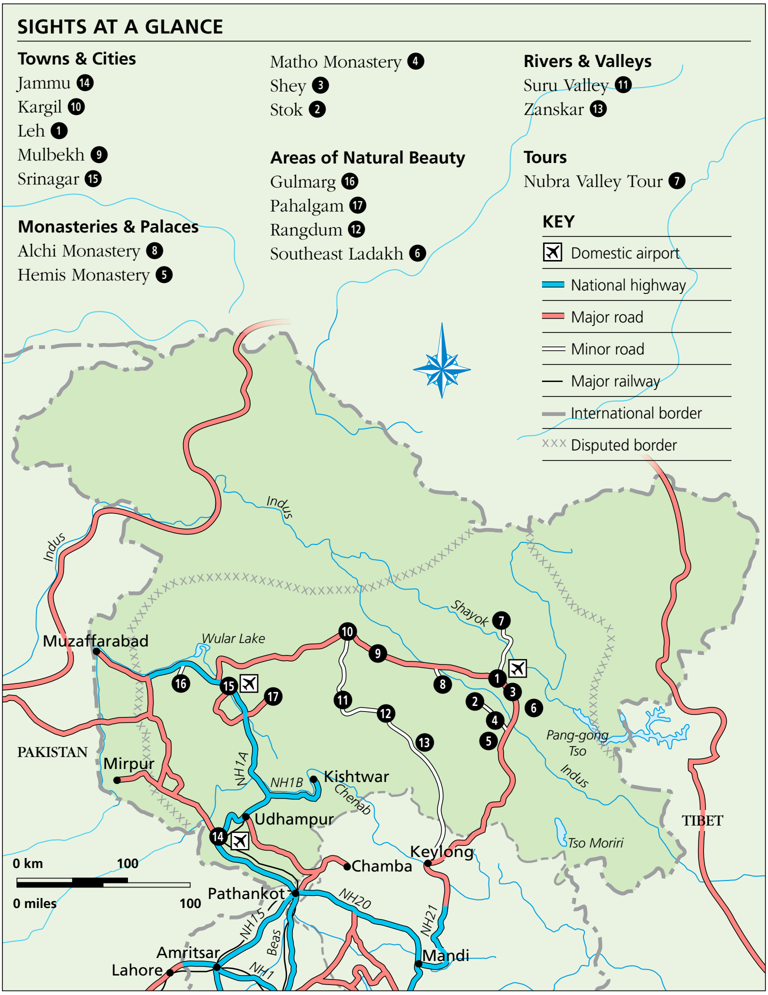
Monks praying at Tabo Monastery

Fields of buckwheat in the Sangla Valley ***(see pp118–19)*** ▷

LADAKH, JAMMU & KASHMIR



Lying across six major mountain ranges, and covering an area of 222,000 sq km (85,715 sq miles), Jammu and Kashmir is India's northernmost state, bordering Pakistan and China's Tibetan Plateau. Its three distinct regions – Ladakh, Jammu and the Kashmir Valley – offer a rich diversity of landscapes, religions, and people. The predominantly Muslim Kashmir Valley is a mosaic of forests, ricefields, lakes and waterways, its gentle beauty now shattered by armed insurgency *(see p154)*. Jammu, encompassing plains, mountains and foothills, boasts the famous hilltop shrine of Vaishno Devi, an important pilgrimage site for Hindus. Sparsely populated Ladakh, which accounts for two-thirds of the state's area, is a high altitude desert. Its harsh lines are softened by the emerald green of oasis villages, the crystal light of cloudless blue skies, and the dramatic silhouettes of ancient Buddhist monasteries which, for many visitors, are Ladakh's main attraction.



SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

Towns & Cities
Jammu ⓮
Kargil ❿
Leh ❶
Mulbekh ❾
Srinagar ⓯

Monasteries & Palaces
Alchi Monastery ❽
Hemis Monastery ❺
Matho Monastery ❹
Shey ❸
Stok ❷

Areas of Natural Beauty
Gulmarg ⓰
Pahalgam ⓱
Rangdum ⓬
Southeast Ladakh ❻

Rivers & Valleys
Suru Valley ⓫
Zanskar ⓭

Tours
Nubra Valley Tour ❼

KEY
- ☒ Domestic airport
- ▬ National highway
- ▬ Major road
- ═ Minor road
- — Major railway
- ▬ International border
- xxx Disputed border

Indus
Indus
Muzaffarabad
Wular Lake
16
15
17
10
9
8
7
Shayok
1
3
2
4
5
6
11
12
13
PAKISTAN
Mirpur
NH1A
NH1B
Kishtwar
Chenab
Udhampur
14
Chamba
Keylong
Pang-gong Tso
Indus
Tso Moriri
TIBET
0 km 100
0 miles 100
Pathankot
NH20
NH21
NH75
Beas
Amritsar
Lahore
NH1
Mandi

◁ **Buddhist monks in Ladakh blowing conch shells to announce the beginning of prayers**

The abandoned Leh Palace, once the seat of the royal family

ACCLIMATIZING TO LEH

Visitors flying into Leh, situated at an altitude of 3,500 m (11,483 ft), should allow themselves enough time to acclimatize. Any strenuous physical activity should be avoided for at least the first 24 hours. During the first few days, Leh's high altitude can often cause insomnia, headaches, breathlessness and loss of appetite.

Leh ❶

Leh district. 1,077 km (669 miles) N of Delhi. 👥 *15,000.* ✈ *11 km (7 miles) S of town centre.* 🚌 ℹ *(01982) 252 297.* 🎉 *Muharram (Mar/Apr), Buddha Jayanti (May), Losar (Dec).* **Travel permits** *required for certain restricted areas in Ladakh* (see p142).

The Buddha, Leh Palace

From the 17th century right until 1949, Ladakh's principal town, Leh, was the hub of the bustling caravan trade *(see p142)* between Punjab and Central Asia, and between Kashmir and Tibet. The large **Main Bazaar**, with its broad kerbs, was clearly designed to facilitate the passage of horses, donkeys and camels, and to provide room for the display and storage of merchandise.

The town is dominated by the nine-storeyed **Leh Palace**, built in the 1630s by Sengge Namgyal. A prolific builder of monasteries and forts, with many conquests to his name, he was Ladakh's most famous king. The palace's massive inward-leaning walls are in the same architectural tradition as the Potala Palace in Lhasa which, in fact, the Leh Palace antedates by about 50 years. Sadly, the solidity of its exterior belies the dilapidation inside, although some repair work is now being done. Visitors can go up to the open terrace on the level above the main entrance.

Much of Leh's charm lies in the opportunities it offers for pleasant strolls and walks. In the heart of town are the Main Bazaar and **Chang Gali**, with their eateries and curio shops selling precious stones and ritual religious objects such as prayer wheels. Along the Bazaar's wide kerb, women from nearby villages sit with large baskets of fresh vegetables, spinning wool on drop spindles and exchanging lively chatter in between intervals of brisk commerce.

The **Jokhang**, a modern ecumenical Buddhist establishment, and the town mosque, built in the late 17th century, are close to each other in the Main Bazaar. Between the Main Bazaar and the Polo Ground, at the eastern end of town, is the fascinating **Old Town**, with its maze of narrow alleys dotted with *chortens* and *mani* walls *(see p141)*, and its cluster of flat-roofed houses constructed of sunbaked bricks.

On the peak above the town are the small fort and monastery complex of **Namgyal Tsemo** (mid-16th century), believed to be the earliest royal residence in Leh. Next to its now ruined fort are a *gonkhang* (Temple of the Guardian Deities) and a temple to Maitreya (the Future Buddha), both of which have vibrant murals. Those inside the *gonkhang* include a court scene with a portrait believed to be that of King Tashi Namgyal (mid-16th century), the founder of the complex.

At the western edge of Leh is the **Ecological Centre**, which runs development projects in agriculture, solar energy, health and environmental awareness in several of the surrounding villages. The centre also houses a library and a shop selling local handicrafts.

The gleaming white **Shanti Stupa** ("Peace Pagoda"), founded in the 1980s under the sponsorship of Japanese Buddhists, is situated on a hilltop west of the city.

Less than ten minutes' walk, in any direction away from the heart of town, will bring one

Barley fields around Leh

An archery contest near Leh

to barley fields, green or gold according to the season. Down the hill in the village of **Skara**, the massive mud walls of the 19th-century **Zorawar Fort** catch the eye. Another lovely walk is up past the **Moravian Church** to the serene village of **Changspa** with its ancient *chorten*. From here a road turns towards the beautifully-maintained 19th-century **Sankar Monastery**, with its impressive images of Avalokitesvara and of Vajra-Bhairav, Guardian of the Gelugpa order *(see p139).*

Environs

Choglamsar, 7 km (4 miles) south of Leh, is the main Tibetan refugee settlement in Ladakh. It includes the Dalai Lama's prayer ground, known as Shanti Sthal, an SOS Children's Village, the Central Institute of Buddhist Studies, a solar-heated hospital and workshops that promote colourful Tibetan handicrafts.

Dramatically situated on a hilltop, so close to the airport that the wings of landing aircraft come perilously close to its walls, is the 15th-century **Spituk Monastery**, the oldest establishment of the Gelugpa sect in Ladakh. It houses the library of Tsongkapa, the sect's founder, and a shrine devoted to the goddess Tara *(see p141)* in her myriad manifestations. Situated in one of Ladakh's most charming villages, **Phiyang Monastery**, is one of only two that represent the Drigungpa sect. It was founded by Ladakh's 16th-century ruler, Tashi Namgyal, supposedly as an act of atonement for the violence and treachery by which he came to the throne. Among its many treasures is a large and interesting collection of Kashmiri bronzes of Buddhist deities, dating back to the 13th century, or possibly even earlier.

Leh Palace
○ *daily. Book in advance.*

Namgyal Tsemo
○ *daily. Book in advance.*

Ecological Centre
○ *Mon–Fri.* ***Tel*** *(01982) 253 221.*

Jokhang
○ *daily.*

Sankar Monastery
○ *daily.*

Spituk Monastery
○ *daily. with permission of the lama-in-charge.*

Phiyang Monastery
○ *daily. with permission of the lama-in-charge.*

Spituk Monastery's labyrinth of shrines linked by narrow passages

FESTIVALS OF LADAKH, JAMMU & KASHMIR

Hemis Festival *(Jun/Jul),* Hemis. Of all Ladakh's monastery festivals *(see p140)* the one at Hemis is the most famous. This spectacular dance-drama, with colourful masks and costumes, offers a wonderfully authentic experience of Ladakhi culture.

Masked dancers performing at the Hemis Festival

Sindhu Darshan *(variable),* Leh. A recent introduction, this festival is held annually as a homage to the Indus. Held on the river banks, it includes exhibitions, polo matches and archery contests.

Ladakh Festival *(1–15 Sep),* Leh and Kargil. Subsidized by the Tourism Department, this is held over two weeks in Leh's Polo Grounds, as well as in Kargil and some selected villages. Apart from the traditional masked dances, the events include polo matches and archery contests – both being popular traditional sports in the region. A handicrafts exhibition is also held.

Thikse Festival *(Oct/Nov),* Thikse. The annual festival of the Gelugpa sect takes place in a beautiful setting. The precise dates of monastery festivals are fixed according to the Tibetan lunar calendar and vary every year.

Milad-ul-Nabi *(Apr/May),* Srinagar. The Prophet's birthday is celebrated with special fervour at the Hazratbal Mosque, when its sacred relic, a lock of the Prophet's hair, is displayed to devotees.

Monasteries Along the Indus

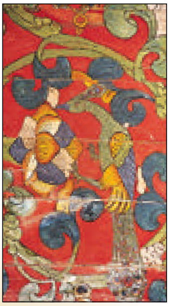
Maitreya in Thikse

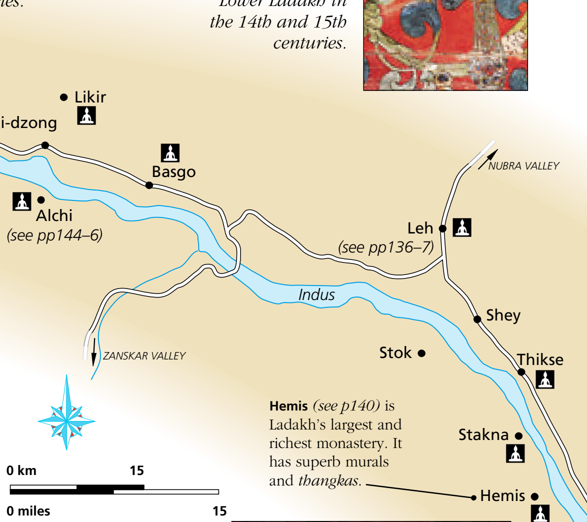
Several of Ladakh's world-famous monasteries are situated along the Indus Valley, the region's historical and cultural heartland. Typically, a Ladakhi monastery *(gompa)* stands on a hill or ridge above the village that adjoins it. Its upper part consists of temples *(lhakhang)* and assembly halls *(dukhang)*, together with the *gonkhang*, the Temple of the Fearsome Guardian Deities. The monks' dwellings spill picturesquely down the hillside. The monasteries are still active centres of worship, so approach them respectfully.

Monks dancing in the courtyard of Lamayuru Monastery

Likir, *founded in the 12th century, houses a fine collection of* thangkas *and images, the latter enclosed in beautifully carved wooden frames.*

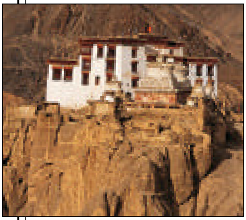
Basgo *has beautiful 16th-century murals in its fort and temple dedicated to Maitreya, the Future Buddha. It was the capital of Lower Ladakh in the 14th and 15th centuries.*





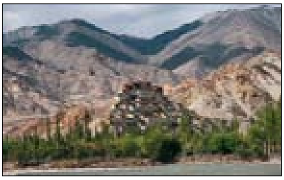
Ri-dzong *is built on top of a ridge of glacial debris which blocks a winding gorge. Founded in the 1840s by the Gelugpa sect, its monks follow a particularly austere regime.*

Hemis *(see p140)* is Ladakh's largest and richest monastery. It has superb murals and *thangkas*.

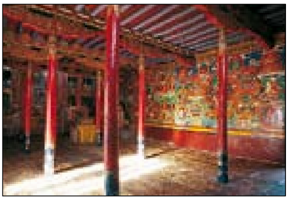

Lamayuru *is dramatically situated on a high spur overlooking an eerily eroded landscape. Believed to date to the 11th century, its oldest temple has a famous image of Vairocana, the Central Buddha of Meditation* (see p146). *Lamayuru also has a fine collection of* thangkas.

Stakna, *built in the early 17th century, has an exquisite silver* chorten *in its* dukhang, *surrounded by vividly-coloured murals.*

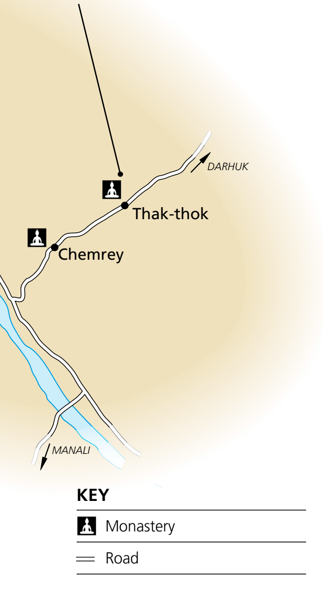
See also features on Little Tibet *(p123)*, Buddhist Iconography *(p141)*, and In the Buddha's Footsteps *(p221)*.



Thikse, *a 15th-century architectural gem crowning the crest of a hill, is a Gelugpa monastery which also has a modern Maitreya temple, consecrated by the Dalai Lama.*



Chemrey, *perched on a hilltop and dating from the 1640s, houses Buddhist scriptures with silver covers and gold lettering.*



Thak-thok Monastery belongs to the Nyingmapa sect. It is built around a cave which Guru Padmasambhava, the 8th-century saint, is believed to have used for meditation.

Stok Palace, residence of Ladakh's erstwhile royal family

Stok ❷

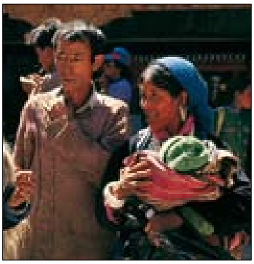
Ladakh district. 14 km (9 miles) S of Leh. 🚌 ℹ *Leh Tourist Office, (01982) 242 010.* 🎭 *Stok Monastic Festival (Feb/Mar).* **Stok Palace** ○ *May–Oct.* 🎫 🚫📷

The palace at Stok has been the residence of the Namgyals, the former rulers of Ladakh, since its independence in 1843. Part of the palace has been converted into a fine museum of the dynasty and its history. Its collections include a set of 35 *thangkas (see p123)* representing the life of the Buddha, said to have been commissioned by the 16th-century king, Tashi Namgyal. Images and ritual religious objects, such as the bell and *dorje* (thunderbolt), are of unsurpassed workmanship. Secular objects include fine jade cups, the queens' jewellery, including a spectacular headdress, the kings' turban-shaped crown, and ceremonial robes. There is also a sword with its blade twisted into a knot, said to have been contorted by the enormous strength of Tashi Namgyal.

Shey ❸

Ladakh district. 15 km (9 miles) SE of Leh. 🚌 ℹ *Leh Tourist Office, (01982) 252 297.* 🎭 *Shey Shrubla (1st week of Sep).*
Shey Palace ○ *daily.* 🎫

Shey was the ancient capital of Ladakh. Its abandoned palace contains a temple with a gigantic, late 17th-century Buddha image, surrounded by murals of deities, painted in rich colours and gold. Another beautiful Buddha image is housed in a nearby temple. Just below the palace, are huge 11th-century rock carvings of the Five Buddhas of Meditation *(see p146)*.



A Ladakhi couple bringing their baby to be blessed at Shey

BUDDHIST SECTS IN LADAKH

Five sects of Tibetan Buddhism are represented in Ladakh. Thak-thok monastery belongs to the Nyingmapa, which is based on the teachings of the 8th-century saint, Padmasambhava *(see p120)*, while Matho *(see p140)* with its oracle monks belongs to the Sakyapa. The Drugpa and Drigungpa sects are based on the teachings of a line of Indian masters from the 11th century. The lamas of all these sects wear red hats on ceremonial occasions. The lamas who wear yellow hats belong to the reformist Gelugpa sect, headed by the Dalai Lama *(see p123)*, which exercised political control in Tibet until 1959. Apart from Thak-thok and Matho, and the two Drigungpa monasteries of Phiyang *(see p137)* and Lamayuru, all Ladakh's monasteries belong to either the Drugpa or Gelugpa sects.

Monks of the Gelugpa sect chanting prayers

Dance of the Oracle at the 16th-century Matho Monastery

Matho Monastery ④

Leh district. 30 km (19 miles) SE of Leh. 🚌 ○ *daily.* ⊘ 🎪 *Annual Matho Festival (Feb/Mar).*

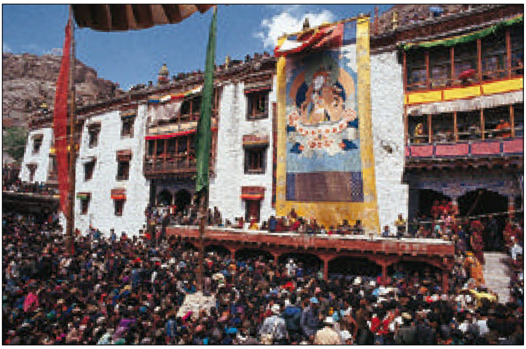
The only monastery in Ladakh of the Sakyapa sect *(see p139)*, Matho, built in the early 16th century, is also one of the few that continues to attract many new entrants. Its main importance, however, lies in its Oracles – two monks who, after months of purification by fasting and meditation, are possessed by a deity. This event takes place during Matho's annual festival, held between February and March. The drama of the occasion is tremendous as the Oracles traverse the topmost parapet of the monastery blindfolded, despite the 30-m (98-ft) drop onto the rocks below. The Oracles answer questions put to them about public and private affairs, and great faith is reposed in their predictions. Matho also has a small museum with a rare collection of 16th-century *thangkas* and costumes.

Hemis Monastery ⑤

Leh district. 43 km (27 miles) SE of Leh. 🚌 ○ *daily.* ⊘ 🎪 *Annual Hemis Festival (Jun).*

Tucked away up a winding glen in the mountains south of the Indus, Hemis is the largest as well as the richest of the central Ladakh monasteries. It was founded in the 1630s as a Drugpa establishment by King Sengge Namgyal, and continued to be the most favoured monastery of the Namgyal dynasty. Of its several temples, the most rewarding is the *tsh g-khang*, a secondary assembly hall which contains a fine image of the Buddha in front of a huge silver *chorten* set with flawless turquoises.

Hemis is also renowned for its spectacular annual festival, dedicated to Guru Padmasambhava, the 8th-century Indian apostle who took Buddhism to Tibet. A unique feature of this festival, which is held in the summer and attracts huge crowds, is the 12-yearly unveiling of the monastery's greatest treasure – an enormous, three-storey high *thangka* of Padmasambhava, embroidered and studded with pearls and semi-precious stones. The next unveiling of the *thangka* is due in 2016.



The giant *thangka* unfurled during the festival at Hemis Monastery

THE MONASTIC DANCE-DRAMAS OF LADAKH

The dance-dramas performed at Ladakh's annual monastery festivals are immensely popular events, constituting a link between popular and esoteric Buddhism. Attended by high lamas and novice monks in their ceremonial robes and hats, as well as by local families dressed in their splendid traditional costumes, these events are a vibrant expression of age-old cultural and religious values. The dancers, representing divine or mythological figures, wear colourful brocade robes and heavy masks as they perform ceremonial dances around the monastery courtyard. The solemnity of the occasion is lightened by comic interludes performed by dancers in skeleton costumes, who bound into the arena performing agile gymnastics, and caricaturing the solemn rites just enacted, to the delight of the assembled spectators. In the climactic scene the masked figures ritually dismember a doll moulded from barley flour dough (perhaps symbolizing the human soul) and scatter its fragments in all directions. Besides attracting large numbers of outside visitors, these monastery festivals also provide people from far-flung Ladakhi villages an eagerly awaited opportunity to meet each other, and exchange news and views.

Masked dancers at a monastery festival

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp694–5 and pp723–4

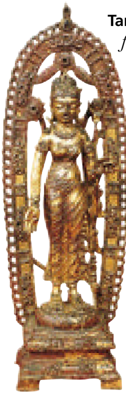
Buddhist Iconography

The external manifestations of Buddhism are ubiquitous in Leh district and Zanskar – prayer flags fluttering in the breeze, prayer wheels turning in the hands of the elderly, chortens and mani walls inset with stone slabs carved with the sacred invocation Om mani padme hum ("Hail to the Jewel in the Lotus"). Inside the monasteries, the iconography is more complex. Each divinity of the Mahayana Buddhist pantheon is depicted in several different manifestations, together with a host of saints, teachers and mythical figures, mandalas and allegorical compositions. Shown below are some images that are encountered most frequently.

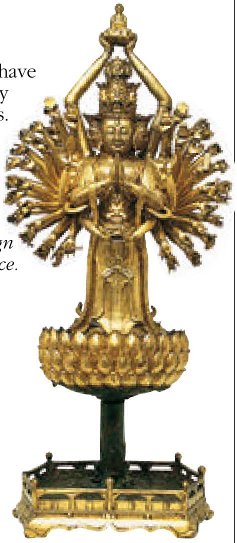
Prayer wheel

THE BODHISATTVAS

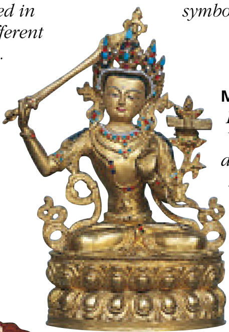
Bodhisattvas are supremely compassionate almost-Buddhas who have attained enlightenment, but are willing to forgo nirvana so that they can help others obtain liberation from the endless cycle of rebirths.



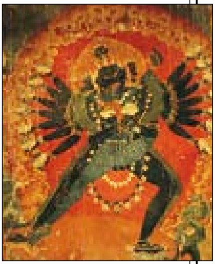
Tara *is the female form of Avalokitesvara and is depicted in 21 different forms.*



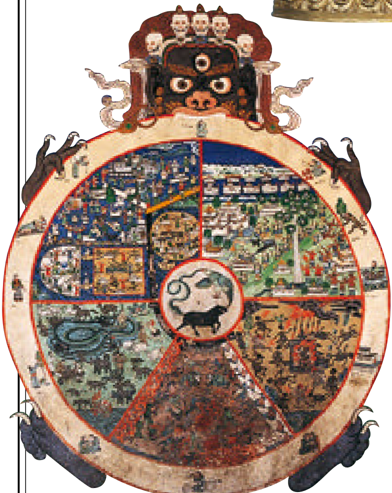
Avalokitesvara, *the Bodhisattva of Compassion, is often shown with 11 heads and multiple arms, symbolizing his benign omnipresence.*



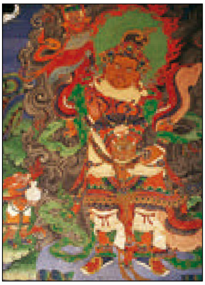
Manjushri, *the Bodhisattva of Wisdom, bears a flaming sword in his hand, to cut through the fog of ignorance.*



Guardian Deities *are usually represented as fierce forms, with skull headdresses, wicked fangs and flames in place of hair. Most commonly seen is Mahakala, usually above the main door of a temple.*

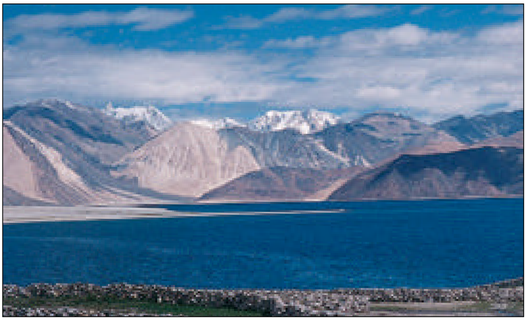


The Wheel of Life, *with animated human and animal figures on it, is mostly painted on temple verandahs. It shows the temptations and sins that make life on earth an endless misery.*



The Lords of the Four Quarters *guard the four cardinal directions. The Lord of the North is recognized by the banner in his right hand, and a mongoose in his left hand.*

See also features on Little Tibet *(p123)* and In the Buddha's Footsteps *(p221).*



Glaciers and peaks encircling the blue-green waters of Pang-gong Tso

Southeast Ladakh ❻

Pang-gong Tso Leh district.150 km (93 miles) E of Leh. **Tso Moriri** Leh district. 220 km (1,137 miles) SE of Leh. ℹ *Leh Tourist Office, (01982) 252 297.* **Travel permits** *required. Contact Deputy Commissioner, Leh, (01982) 252 010. Permits are granted on condition that visitors travel in groups of not less than four, with the tour organized by a registered travel agent along specific tour routes. For more details see p153.*

Southeast Ladakh, on the sensitive international border with Tibet, is a region with a series of spectacularly beautiful lakes. The two major lakes, **Pang-gong Tso** and **Tso Moriri**, are accessible by road, although there are no scheduled bus services.

The biggest of the lakes is the long and narrow Pang-gong Tso. It is 130-km (81-mile) in length and lies at an altitude of 4,420 m (14,500 ft), extending far into Western Tibet. Visitors may go as far as **Spangmik**, 7 km (4 miles) along the lake's southern shore, from where there are spectacular views to the north of the Chang-chenmo Range, its reflection shimmering in the ever-changing blues and greens of the brackish water. Above Spangmik rise the glaciers and snowcapped peaks of the Pang-gong Range.

Tso Moriri, 30 km (19 miles) to the south of Pang-gong Tso is a 140-sq km (54-sq mile) expanse of intensely blue water. At an altitude of 4,600 m (15,092 ft), it is set among rolling hills behind which lie snow-covered mountains. The region's only permanent settlement is on the lake's western shore, **Karzok** – a handful of houses and a monastery, whose barley fields must be among the highest cultivated areas anywhere in the world.

The lake and its freshwater inlets are breeding areas for many species of migratory birds, such as the rare black-necked crane and the great crested grebe. Wild asses, marmots and foxes can also be seen in the region.

Among the human inhabitants of Southeast Ladakh are the nomadic herders, known as Chang-pa, who brave extreme cold (-40° C/-40° F in winter, and freezing nights even in summer) throughout the year, living in their black yak-hair tents. They raise yak and sheep, but their main wealth is the pashmina goat. The severe cold of winter stimulates the goats to grow an undercoat of soft warm fibre, which they shed at the beginning of summer. This fibre, known as *pashm*, is the raw material for Kashmir's renowned shawl industry and is, in fact, the unprocessed form of the world-famous cashmere wool. The lucrative trade in *pashm* from Ladakh's high-altitude pastures as well as from Western Tibet was the motive behind Ladakh's annexation by the Maharaja of Kashmir in 1834.

Pashmina goat

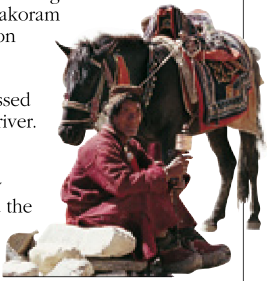
Environs

The twin lakes of **Tso Kar** and **Startsapuk Tso** are 80 km (50 miles) north of Tso Moriri, on the road to Leh. Startsapuk Tso has fresh water, but Tso Kar is so briny that the Chang-pa herders regularly collect salt from deposits near its margins.

Tso Moriri, a breeding ground for the great crested grebe

THE CARAVAN TRADE

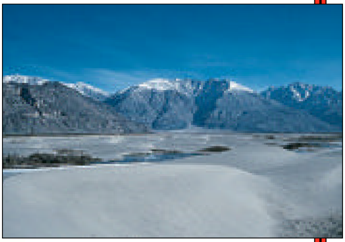
For centuries until 1949, Ladakh was the route for a busy trade between Punjab and Central Asia. The caravans invariably halted at Leh *(see pp136–7)*, where a lot of business was transacted, before proceeding to cross the 5,578-m (18,301-ft) high Karakoram Pass, one of the highest points on any trade route in the world. In summer the caravans traversed Nubra, while in winter they crossed the upper valley of the Shayok river. Every year, over 10,000 pack animals – horses, yaks, Bactrian camels, and an especially sturdy breed of local sheep – traversed the Nubra region, carrying Varanasi brocades, Chinese silk, pearls, spices, Indian tea, *pashm* wool, salt, indigo, opium, carpets, and gold.



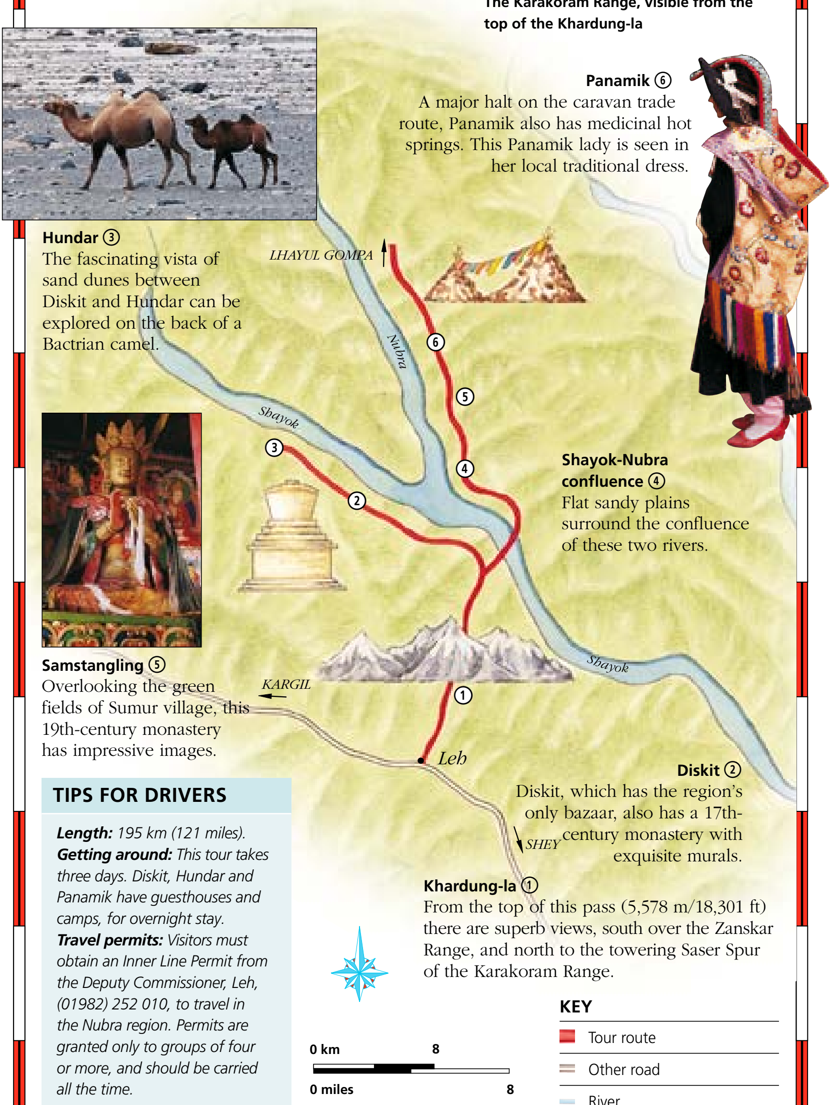
A Ladakhi horseman taking a break for prayers

Nubra Valley Tour ❼

The tour of the Nubra region starts from Leh and follows the old caravan trade route to Central Asia, a “feeder” of the famous Silk Route. It takes in the world’s highest motorable mountain pass – the Khardung-la, pretty villages with banks of wild flowers and stands of willow and poplar, valleys covered with seabuckthorn shrubs, stretches of sand dunes and double-humped Bactrian camels, remote monasteries, and medicinal hot springs.



The Karakoram Range, visible from the top of the Khardung-la



Panamik ⑥
A major halt on the caravan trade route, Panamik also has medicinal hot springs. This Panamik lady is seen in her local traditional dress.

Hundar ③
The fascinating vista of sand dunes between Diskit and Hundar can be explored on the back of a Bactrian camel.

Shayok-Nubra confluence ④
Flat sandy plains surround the confluence of these two rivers.

Samstangling ⑤
Overlooking the green fields of Sumur village, this 19th-century monastery has impressive images.

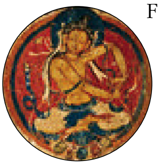
Diskit ②
Diskit, which has the region’s only bazaar, also has a 17th-century monastery with exquisite murals.

Khardung-la ①
From the top of this pass (5,578 m/18,301 ft) there are superb views, south over the Zanskar Range, and north to the towering Saser Spur of the Karakoram Range.

TIPS FOR DRIVERS

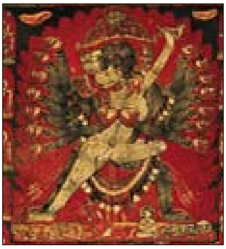
Length: *195 km (121 miles).*
Getting around: *This tour takes three days. Diskit, Hundar and Panamik have guesthouses and camps, for overnight stay.*
Travel permits: *Visitors must obtain an Inner Line Permit from the Deputy Commissioner, Leh, (01982) 252 010, to travel in the Nubra region. Permits are granted only to groups of four or more, and should be carried all the time.*

Alchi Monastery ❽



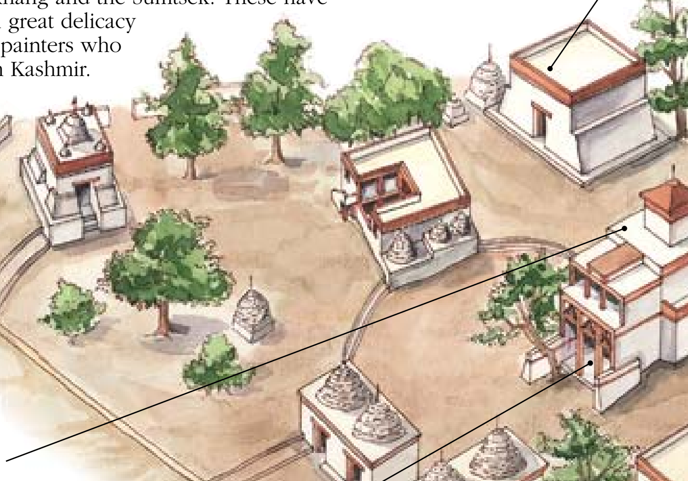
Dancing deity in the Sumtsek

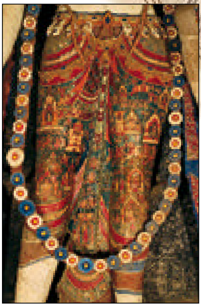
Founded in the early 12th century AD, the religious enclave of Alchi is the jewel among Ladakh's monasteries. Because Alchi was abandoned as a site of active worship, for reasons unknown, as early as the 16th century, the 12th- and 13th-century paintings in its temples have remained remarkably well preserved, undimmed by the soot from butter lamps and incense sticks. Of the five temples in the enclave, the finest murals are in the two oldest, the Dukhang and the Sumtsek. These have been executed with great delicacy and skill by master painters who were probably from Kashmir.



Lhakhang Soma

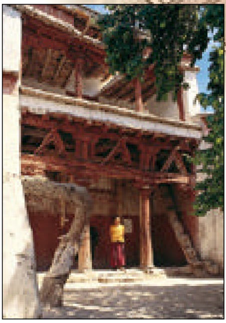
This painting of a Guardian Deity and his female counterpart symbolizes the union of opposites.





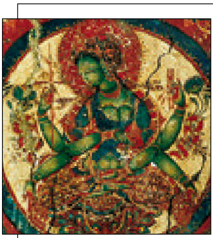
Avalokitesvara

The legs of this gigantic statue in the Sumtsek are covered with exquisite miniature paintings of palaces and Buddhist pilgrimage sites.



★ Sumtsek

The carved wooden façade of this temple is in the style of Kashmiri temple architecture.



Green Tara or Prajnaparamita

GREEN TARA

There are several exquisite images of this goddess, variously identified as Green Tara, the Saviour, and Prajnaparamita (the Perfection of Wisdom) in the Sumtsek. Five of them are to the left of the gigantic Avalokitesvara statue, opposite his leg. The Green Tara seems to have held a special place in Alchi, since the goddess is not given such importance in other monasteries.

STAR FEATURES

- ★ Sumstek
- ★ Dukhang

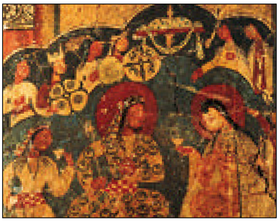
For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp694–5 and pp723–4

View of Alchi
Idyllically located on a bend in the Indus river, Alchi's simple white-washed buildings with their band of deep red trim, stand out against an impressive backdrop of barren mountains.

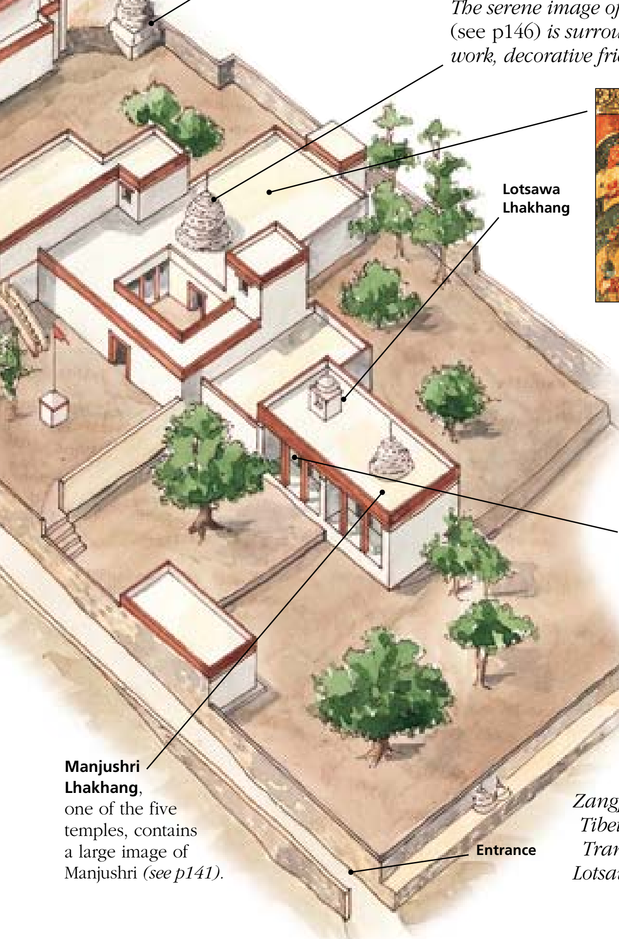
VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Leh district. 70 km (44 miles) W of Leh on the Leh-Kargil Highway.
🚌 ℹ *Leh Tourist Office, (01982) 252 297.* ◯ *daily.* ▨ ⊘
Book ahead for a guide from Leh. Alchi village has accommodation as well as restaurants with toilet facilities.

★ Dukhang
The serene image of the Vairocana Buddha (see p146) *is surrounded by elaborate woodwork, decorative friezes and superb mandalas.*



King and Queen
This mural in the Dukhang shows details of royal dress and hairstyles.

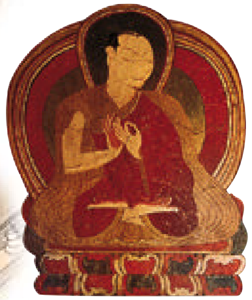


Chortens containing holy relics are dotted around the complex. They are often built in memory of a great lama.

Lotsawa Lhakhang

Manjushri Lhakhang, one of the five temples, contains a large image of Manjushri *(see p141).*

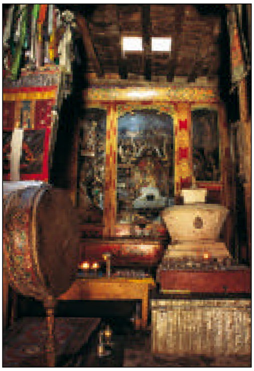
Entrance



Rinchen Zangpo
This rare portrait of Rinchen Zangpo (see p119), *an influential Tibetan saint known as the Great Translator, is in the 12th-century Lotsawa ("Translator") Lhakhang.*

Exploring Alchi Monastery

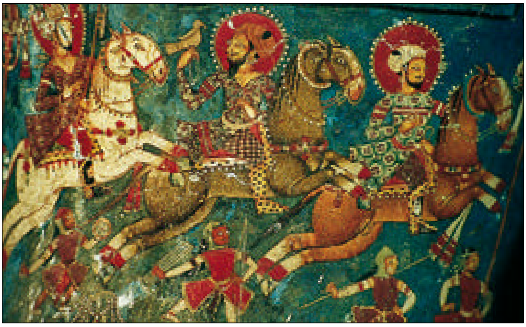
Unknown to the outside world until 1974, when Ladakh was opened up to tourists, Alchi is now one of Ladakh's major attractions, renowned as a great centre of Buddhist art. It was built as a monument to the Second Spreading – the revival of Buddhism that took place in Tibet in the 11th century, on the basis of religious texts brought from Kashmir. The entire Mahayana Buddhist pantheon of deities is represented within its five temples, together with superb paintings of court life, battles and pilgrimages, depicting the costumes, architecture and customs of the time.


One of the many prayer rooms in Alchi Monastery

The assembly hall, known as **Dukhang**, is the oldest of the five temples and holds some of Alchi's greatest treasures. The beautiful central image of Vairocana, the main Buddha of Meditation, is surrounded by a wooden frame exuberantly carved with dancers, musicians, elephants and mythical animals. It is flanked by four other Buddhas of Meditation. Even more impressive are the six elaborate mandalas painted on the walls, together with small scenes of contemporary life. The space between the mandalas is filled with fine decorative details that have an unexpectedly Rococo look about them.

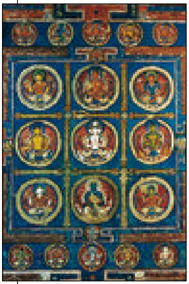
In the three-storeyed **Sumtsek**, the second-oldest temple, are spectacular images and paintings. The temple's most unique features are the gigantic images of Avalokitesvara, Manjushri *(see p141)* and Maitreya, that stand in alcoves in three of its walls. Only their legs and torsos are visible from the ground floor, while their heads protrude into the upper storey. From waist to knee they are draped in dhoti-like garments, covered with remarkably animated and sophisticated miniature paintings. It is advisable to take a torch to examine their incredible detail. The Avalokitesvara image is covered with shrines, palaces, and vignettes of contemporary life. The Maitreya image has scenes from the Buddha's life painted within roundels, and the Manjushri image depicts the 84 Masters of the Tantra.

The three other temples probably date from the late 12th to early 13th centuries, and though they would win acclaim in any other setting, they fade in comparison with the Dukhang and the Sumtsek. The **Manjushri Lhakhang** has murals of the Thousand Buddhas and an enormous, recently-repainted image of Manjushri. The **Lotsawa Lhakhang** has rather more austere paintings and images. It is dedicated to the saint Rinchen Zangpo, who was also closely associated with the Thikse *(see p139)* and Tabo *(see p131)* monasteries. The **Lhakhang Soma**, the last temple to be built at Alchi, has a profusion of fierce-looking deities on its walls, and scenes showing the Buddha preaching.


Riders, Central Asian in appearance, on the Avalokitesvara image

THE FIVE BUDDHAS OF MEDITATION

Buddhism in the 12th century laid emphasis on the Five Dhyani Buddhas, or Buddhas of Meditation, who feature in several mandalas in Alchi. Each of these Buddhas is associated with a direction and a colour. Vairocana (the Resplendent) is associated with the centre and the colour white; Amitabha (the Boundless Light) with the west and the colour red; Akshobhya (the Imperturbable) with the east and the colour blue; Amoghasiddhi (Infallible Success) with the north and the colour green; and Ratnasambhava (the Jewel-Born) with the south and the colour yellow. The Five Buddhas of Meditation symbolize the different aspects of the Buddha, and the mandalas help devotees to meditate on them.

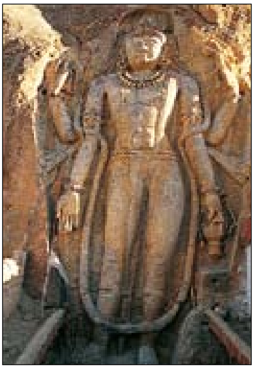

Mandala with the Five Dhyani Buddhas

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp694–5 and pp723–4

Mulbekh ❾

Kargil district. 190 km (118 miles) NW of Leh. 🚌 ℹ *Kargil Tourist Office, (01985) 232 721.*

A pretty village in the Kargil district, Mulbekh, spread over the broad green valley of the Wakha river, is the point at which the proselytizing tide of Islam, spreading towards central Ladakh, lost its impetus. As a consequence, Mulbekh has a mixed population of Buddhists and Muslims, and supports a mosque as well as a monastery, perched on a crag above the village. Its main attraction, however, is a giant engraving of Maitreya, the Future Buddha, on a huge free-standing rock by the roadside. It is believed to date back to the 8th century.


The 8-m (26-ft) high Maitreya Buddha at Mulbekh

Kargil ❿

Kargil district. 230 km (143 miles) NW of Leh and NE of Srinagar. 🚌 ℹ *Kargil Tourist Office, (01985) 232 721.* 🚩 *Muharram (Mar/Apr), Ladakh Festival (Sep).* **Travel permits** *are required for the Dha-Hanu region, available at Leh* (see p142).

For travellers between Leh and Srinagar, Kargil town is a good place to stop for the night. The second largest urban centre in Ladakh, Kargil was an important trading centre before the Partition of India, when the road to Skardu in Baltistan (Pakistan) was still open. The majority of Kargil's population are Shia Muslims, an Islamic sect that regards Muhammad's cousin Ali and his successors as the true imams.

View of the Nun-kun massif from Suru Valley

Kargil apricots are famous, and its hillside orchards are an enchanting sight in May when the trees are in bloom, and in July when the fruit is ripe. The town is also the base for expeditions to the Suru Valley, Zanskar and Nun-kun. Kargil suffered shelling during the conflict between India and Pakistan in 1999, so check the situation before a visit there.

Suru Valley ⓫

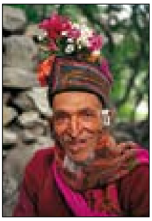
Kargil district. 19 km (12 miles) S of Kargil. 🚌 *to Sankhu.*

The Suru Valley starts from Kargil and runs 100 km (62 miles) to the southeast. One of Ladakh's loveliest and most fertile regions, it boasts rolling alpine pastures, mud-walled villages and views of majestic snowcapped peaks. Abundant water from melting snows gives the Suru Valley rich harvests of barley and plantations of willow and poplar, especially around **Sankhu** village. Close to Sankhu are the ruins of ancient forts, together with rock engravings of Maitreya and Avalokitesvara from the valley's pre-Islamic past. The upper valley is dominated by the peaks, ridges and glaciers of the Nun-kun massif which is 7,135 m (23,409 ft) high. Expeditions to the mountain take off from the picturesque village of **Panikhar**, whose pastures are covered with alpine flowers in June and July.

Prehistoric rock paintings in the Suru Valley

THE DARDS

A conspicuous sight in the bazaars of Kargil and Leh are the Dards, in their colourful caps adorned with flowers. Their aquiline features and fair complexions set them apart from other Ladakhis, as do their customs and traditions. There are several theories about the origins of this small community – among others, that they are the descendants of Alexander the Great's soldiers. Anthropological research, however, indicates that their ancestors migrated from Gilgit in Pakistan before it came under the influence of Islam. There are Dard villages at Dha-Hanu, east of Kargil on the Indus, close to where the river leaves Ladakh for Baltistan (Pakistan).


A Dard in his distinctive cap

A view of the dramatically-situated Phugtal Monastery *(see p151)* in Zanskar ▷

Rangdum ⑫

Kargil district. 110 km (68 miles) SE of Kargil. 🚌 ℹ *Kargil Tourist Office, (01985) 232 721.*

The village of Rangdum serves as a night halt between Kargil *(see p147)* and Zanskar. Though geographically part of the Suru Valley, its largely Buddhist population and its monastery orient it culturally towards Zanskar. Situated on a wide flat plateau at 3,800 m (12,467 ft), crisscrossed by water courses, and framed by snow peaks and hills of curiously striated rock, Rangdum has a wild, desolate beauty. The fortress-like 18th-century **Gelugpa Monastery** is built on a hillock, and a small temple in the complex has a fine wall painting of a battle-scene, with warriors sporting Mongolian-looking armour and battledress.

Zanskar ⑬

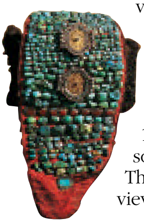
Kargil district. 230 km (143 miles) SE from Kargil to Padum. 🚌 *to Padum.* ℹ *Padum Tourist Office, (01983) 254 017.* 🎭 *Karsha Monastery Festival (Jul/Aug).*

There is a certain mystique about Zanskar. This is no doubt due to its remoteness and altitude, between 3,350 m (10,991 ft) and 4,400 m (14,436 ft), and the fact that the region is difficult to access – the only motorable road into the valley is usually open from around early June to mid-October. But Zanskar's reputation as a Shangri-la also derives from the grandeur of its landscapes, the simplicity of life in its villages, and the serene ambience in its *gompas*, often built around ancient cliff-top meditation caves.

Zanskar contains the valleys of two rivers, the Stod and the Lungnak which, flowing towards each other along the northern flank of the Greater Himalayas, join to become the Zanskar river. This continues north through a gorge in the Zanskar Range, to join the Indus.

The Zanskar river, running through a gorge

The western arm of Zanskar, the Stod Valley, and its central plain are fertile and well-watered – villages form green pockets and the virtual absence of trees contributes to an extraordinary sense of light and space. The inhabitants of this region are mostly agricultural farmers, growing barley, wheat and peas in the lower villages, and raising livestock – yaks, sheep and *dzos* (a hybrid between cows and yaks) – in the higher villages. In winter, many of these farmers take the only route out of the area, trekking for six gruelling days across the frozen Zanskar river, to sell their highly prized yak butter in Leh. In contrast to the fertile western arm and central plain, the eastern arm of Zanskar – the Lungnak Valley – is a forbidding and stony gorge, with few villages to be found in the vicinity.



***Perak*, the traditional female headdress**

The main gateway to Zanskar is the **Pensi-la** (4,400 m/14,436 ft), about 130 km (81 miles) southeast of Kargil. There are spectacular views from the top of this pass, especially of the impressive **Drang-drung Glacier**, which is the origin of the Stod river. The road then continues down to **Padum**, 230 km (143 miles) southeast of Kargil, at an altitude of 3,500 m (11,483 ft). Padum is Zanskar's main village and administrative headquarters. This is the only place in the region with basic facilities including accommodation, transport and a few rudimentary shops. It is also the starting point for a number of treks in the region *(see pp152–3)*. Padum itself has few sites of interest, except for a rock engraving of the Five Dhyani Buddhas *(see p146)* in the centre of the village. A new mosque serves Padum's small community of Muslims. There are a number of interesting sites to explore in the vicinity. Within easy reach

Stucco decoration and images in bas-relief at Sani Gompa, Zanskar

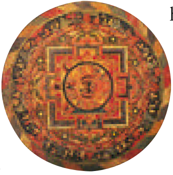
Fertile fields of barley and wheat in the Stod Valley in Zanskar

on foot, is the village of **Pipiting**, which has a temple and *chorten* on top of a mound of glacial debris, and a pavilion which was specially constructed for the Dalai Lama's prayer assemblies.

A short distance away is **Sani**, 8 km (5 miles) northwest of Padum, one of the oldest religious sites in the Western Himalayas. Within the monastery walls stands the Kanika Chorten, its name possibly linking it to the Kushana ruler Kanishka *(see p43)*, whose empire stretched from Afghanistan to Varanasi in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD. The monastery itself is said to have been founded by Padmasambhava *(see p120)* in the 8th century, and its main temple has some fine murals. Even more interesting is another small temple in the complex, which has unique, beautifully painted stucco bas-relief decorations, and niches in the walls for images. Sani is surrounded by a stand of poplars, conspicuous in this otherwise treeless landscape.

Visible from Padum, the buildings of the Gelugpa monastery of **Karsha**, 10 km (6 miles) northeast of Padum, seem to spill down the mountainside west of the main valley, until they merge with the houses and fields of the village. This site includes ancient rock engravings, and the murals in its Avalokitesvara temple, just outside the main complex, seem to put it in the same period as Alchi *(see pp144–6)*. Tradition, however, attributes the monastery's foundation to the ubiquitous Padmasambhava. Karsha has a large community of resident monks, and holds its colourful annual festival between July and August.

Stongde, on the opposite side of the valley, 12 km (7 miles) from Padum, is perched on a ridge, high above the mosaic of the village's fields. Believed to have been founded in the 11th century, it houses no fewer than seven well-maintained temples, some of them containing exquisite murals.



Mandala, Bardhan Monastery

The villages of Sani, Karsha and Stongde are connected by motor transport, though the monasteries in the **Lungnak Valley** are less accessible. The narrow footpath leading up the valley winds along unstable scree slopes high above the river, and the walk is strenuous. It takes a sharp climb on foot or on horseback to reach **Bardhan** and **Phugtal** monasteries.

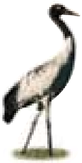
Bardhan, 9 km (6 miles) southeast of Padum, is spectacularly located atop a crag jutting out from the mountain and rising some 100 m (328 ft) sheer out of the river. It has fine wall paintings dating back to the time of the monastery's foundation in the early 17th century. Of all Ladakh's many monasteries however, none, not even Bardhan or Lamayuru, can rival Phugtal, 60 km (37 miles) southeast of Padum, for the grandeur and drama of its location. Its main temples are constructed inside a huge cave on the mountainside above the Tsarap river, at a point where the drop to the water is almost sheer. Yet below the temples the monks' dwellings have somehow been built on or into the cliff-face, and the whole improbable complex is linked by a crazy system of ladders and walkways. There is no record of Phugtal monastery's foundation, but the style of its paintings, some of them quite striking, link it with the Tabo monastery in Spiti *(see p131)* and the traditions established by the Tibetan saint Rinchen Zangpo *(see p119)* in the 11th century. Its monks belong to the Gelugpa order.

Phugtal Monastery, built into a sheer cliff-face

Sani, Karsha, Stongde, Bardhan and Phugtal Monasteries

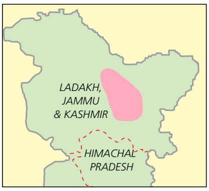
○ *daily.*

Trekking in Ladakh and Zanskar



Black-necked crane

Trekking in the arid, extremely cold trans-Himalayan desert of Ladakh and Zanskar, very often at altitudes that exceed 5,000 m (16,404 ft), can be a uniquely exhilarating experience. The terrain, as starkly beautiful as any highland setting in the world, has a number of trails, many of which trace ancient trading routes to Central Asia. They lead past spectacularly located monasteries, remote passes, sometimes staggeringly high, deep river gorges and lush meadows scattered with *mani* walls and *chortens*. The best time to trek is between June and September, when the land is not snowbound and the terraced fields are being harvested.

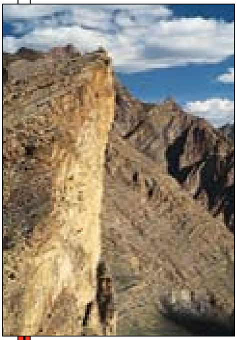

LADAKH, JAMMU & KASHMIR
HIMACHAL PRADESH

LOCATOR MAP

🟥 Area shown below

Likir to Tingmosgang is an easy, two-day, 22-km (14-mile) path, past a number of villages at 4,000 m (13,123 ft).

From Lamayuru, a tough five-day, 65-km (40-mile) trek, via Konki-la at 4,905 m (16,093 ft), ends at Alchi (*see pp144–5*).



Padum to Lamayuru

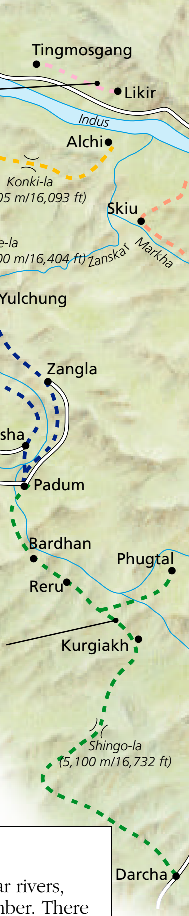
This 160-km (99-mile) path follows the Zanskar river via Karsha, past the impressive Lingshet Monastery and Singe-la ("Lion Pass"), ending at Lamayuru. A slightly easier route past Zangla, joins the main trail at Yelchang village.

Duration: *10 days*
Altitude: *5,000 m (16,404 ft)*
Level of difficulty: *tough*

Padum to Darcha

The 115-km (71-mile) path goes from Zanskar into Himachal Pradesh, along the beautiful Tsarap river, past Phugtal Monastery and Kurgiakh, Zanskar's highest village at 4,100 m (13,451 ft).

Duration: *10 days*
Altitude: *5,100 m (16,732 ft)*
Level of difficulty: *moderate*


Tingmosgang
Lamayuru
Likir
Wanlah
Indus
Alchi
Konki-la
(4,905 m/16,093 ft)
Skiu
Singe-la
(5,000 m/16,404 ft)
Zanskar
Markha
Lingshet
Yulchung
Zangla
Karsha
Padum
Bardhan
Phugtal
Reru
Kurgiakh
Shingo-la
(5,100 m/16,732 ft)
Darcha

Rafting down the Indus river on rubber dinghies, a popular sport

OTHER OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

White-water rafting on the Indus and Zanskar rivers, is a popular activity from July to mid-September. There are various options to consider on the Indus river, from calm "float trips" between Hemis and Choglamsar, to longer stints between Spituk and Alchi. **Jeep safaris** to the lakes of Tso Kar and Tso Moriri and back, take three days, with tents pitched near Karzok village. The region's rich wildlife include bar-headed geese, black-necked cranes and the *kiang* (Tibetan wild ass).

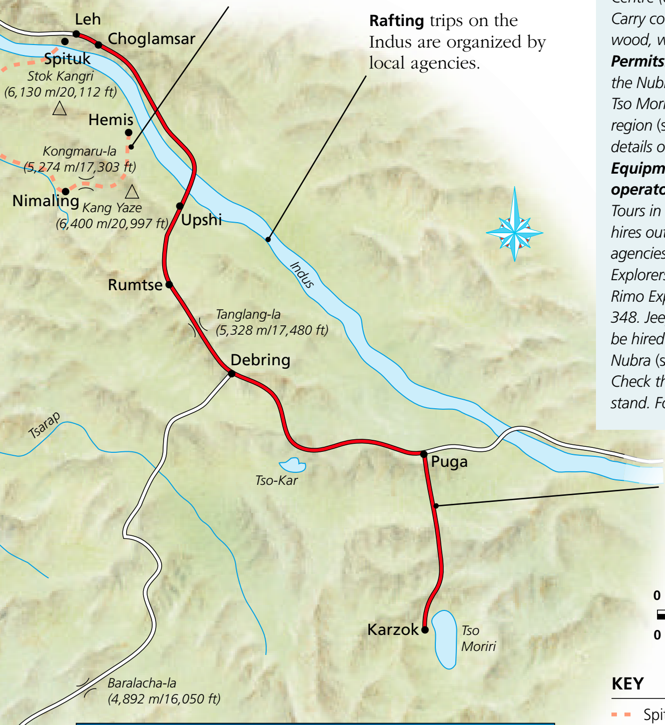
Spituk to Hemis

Ladakh's most popular trek, this 105-km (65-mile) path runs along the Indus river through Markha Valley, past Skiu village and the high pass of Kongmaru, and ends at Hemis Monastery (see p140).

Duration: *8 days*

Altitude: *5,274 m (17,303 ft)*

Level of difficulty: *easy*


Leh
Choglamsar
Spituk
Stok Kangri
(6,130 m/20,112 ft)
Hemis
Kongmaru-la
(5,274 m/17,303 ft)
Nimaling
Kang Yaze
(6,400 m/20,997 ft)
Upshi
Indus
Rumtse
Tanglang-la
(5,328 m/17,480 ft)
Debring
Tsarap
Tso-Kar
Puga
Karzok
Tso
Moriri
Baralacha-la
(4,892 m/16,050 ft)
0 km 20
0 miles 20

Rafting trips on the Indus are organized by local agencies.

Leh to Tso Moriri is a 230-km (143-mile), ten-hour journey by jeep.

KEY

- ╌ Spituk to Hemis
- ╌ Likir to Tingmosgang
- ╌ Lamayuru to Alchi
- ╌ Padum to Lamayuru
- ╌ Padum to Darcha
- ━ Leh to Tso Moriri
- ═ Minor road
- △ Peak
- ⌒ Pass

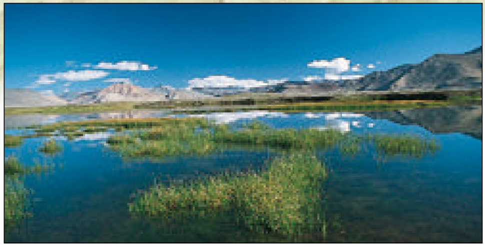
PRACTICAL TIPS

Be prepared: *Most of the walking is hard, and it is imperative to be well acclimatized to the altitude, as even the bottoms of river gorges are 3,000 m (9,843 ft) above sea level. For tips on altitude sickness, see p767. Guides and ponies are essential for all treks in the region. Maps are insufficient, so don't wander off on your own as it could prove fatal. For more details on trekking see p751.*

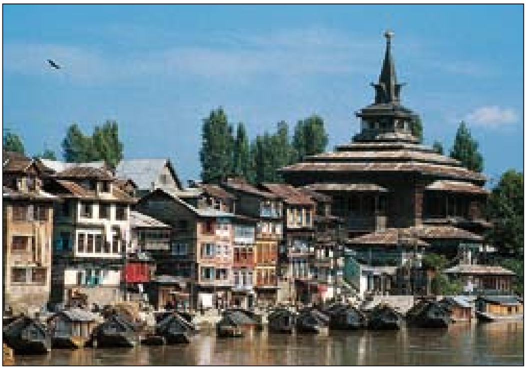
On the trek: *Drink plenty of water. Do not litter; carry all rubbish back with you. Plastics can be taken to the Ecology Centre (01982) 253 221 in Leh. Carry cooking fuel. Never burn wood, which is a scarce resource.*

Permits: *Permits are required for the Nubra Valley, Pang-gong Tso, Tso Moriri and the Dha-Hanu region* (see p142). *For general details on permits see p758.*

Equipment, jeep hire and operators: *Dreamland Trek & Tours in Leh, (01982) 252 089 hires out trekking gear. Rafting agencies include Indus Himalayan Explorers (01982) 253 454 and Rimo Expeditions (01982) 253 348. Jeeps are expensive and can be hired from Leh for trips to Nubra* (see p143) *and the lakes. Check the price list at the taxi stand. For more details see p755.*



Tso Kar or "White Lake", lying northwest of Tso Moriri


Srinagar's 14th-century Shah Hamadan Mosque, made entirely of wood

CAUTION

At present, it is not advisable to visit Jammu and Kashmir, due to continued unrest. In recent years, terrorist activity by militant groups in the area has included bomb blasts, kidnappings and sniper fire. Foreign tourists are sometimes specially targeted.

Jammu ⑭

Jammu district. 500 km (311 miles) NW of Delhi. 👥 *378,400.* ✈ *8 km (5 miles) SW of city centre.* 🚆 🚌 ℹ *J&K Tourism, Vir Marg, (0191) 254 8172.* 🎉 *Lohri (13 Jan), Jammu Festival (Apr), Navratra (Sep/Oct).*

The winter capital of Jammu and Kashmir state, Jammu is located on a bluff of the Shivalik Range, overlooking the northern plains. The main site of interest is the **Amar Mahal**, once the residence of the maharajas, and today a museum with artifacts relating to the region's culture and history. Jammu is also the base for the pilgrimage to the cave shrine of the goddess **Vaishno Devi** in the Trikuta mountains, 50 km (31 miles) away. The shrine attracts four million Hindus every year.

🏛 Amar Mahal Museum
Off Srinagar Rd. ○ *Tue–Sun.* 🎟

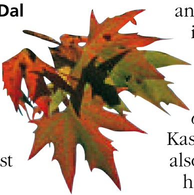
Srinagar ⑮

Srinagar district. 700 km (435 miles) NW of Delhi. 👥 *895,000.* ✈ *8 km (5 miles) S of city centre.* 🚌 ℹ *J&K Tourism, (0194) 245 2690.* 🎉 *Milad-ul-Nabi (May).*

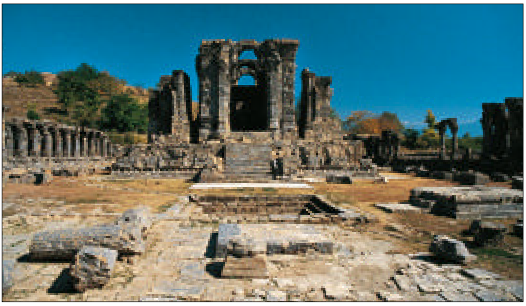
Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, is a city of lakes and waterways, gardens and picturesque wooden architecture. The old quarters of the city sprawl over both sides of the Jhelum river, crossed by seven bridges. Although the bridges have their own names (such as Amira Kadal and Zaina Kadal), they are also known by their numbers; an Eighth Bridge, built more recently (in the 20th century) above First Bridge, is known with typical Kashmiri wit as Zero Bridge. This serves the modern part of the city, built in the late 19th century. At the city's edge are the idyllic **Dal** and **Nagin Lakes**, linked by a network of backwaters.

Srinagar's mosques and shrines are among the city's most attractive features. Typically, these are built of wood intricately carved in geometric patterns, and instead of a dome they are surmounted by a pagoda-like steeple. The most striking examples are the **Mosque of Shah Hamadan** in the old city, and the **Shah Makhdum Sahib Shrine** on the slopes of Hari Parbat hill. Two conventional stone mosques, the **Patthar Mosque** and the **Mosque of Akhund Mulla Shah**, both beautifully proportioned structures, date from the 17th century. In an altogether different style is the **Hazratbal Mosque**, with its dazzling white dome and single slender minaret. Rebuilt in the Saracenic style after a fire in the 1960s, it contains Kashmir's most sacred relic, a hair from the beard of the Prophet Muhammad.

The Mughal emperors delighted in Kashmir's beauty and further enhanced it by introducing the stately *chinar* tree *(Platanous orientalis)* to the Kashmir Valley. They also created terraced hillside gardens designed around fountains and watercourses, which were formed by channeling water from natural springs or streams.


Chinar leaves in autumn colours

Of the 777 Mughal gardens that reportedly once graced the Kashmir Valley, not many survive. There are three, however, within easy reach of Srinagar, on the eastern shore of the Dal Lake – **Chashmashahi**, **Nishat** and **Shalimar Gardens**. Above


The impressive ruins of the 8th-century Sun Temple at Martand

A house in Gulmarg, one of India's few ski resorts

the pretty Chashmashahi Garden, and rising tier upon tier on the mountainside, are the ruins of a 17th-century religious college. Built by a Mughal prince for his teacher, it is somewhat incongruously known as **Pari Mahal** or "Palace of the Fairies". From this vantage point, there are heart-stopping views of Dal Lake and the snowy ridge of the Pir Panjal Range.

Environs

Vestiges of Kashmir's pre-Islamic past can be seen in the ruins of magnificent Hindu temples at **Avantipora**, 28 km (17 miles) southeast of Srinagar, and **Martand**, 60 km (37 miles) southeast of Srinagar. The Sun Temple at Martand is believed to date from the 8th century AD, while the two Avantipora temples are probably from the 9th century AD. Built with great limestone blocks fitted together without mortar, these temples bear witness to the astonishing degree of technical expertise that prevailed in the early medieval period.

🍁 **Chashmashahi Garden**
○ *daily.* 🚫📷

🍁 **Nishat and Shalimar Gardens**
○ *daily.*

Gulmarg ⑯

Srinagar district. 58 km (36 miles) W of Srinagar. 🚌 ℹ *J&K Tourism, Gulmarg Tourist Office, (01954) 254 439.*

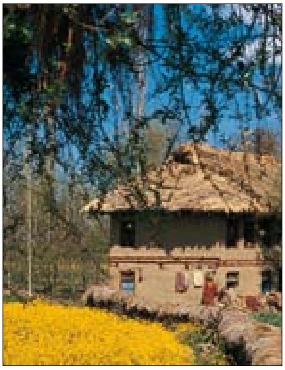
Gulmarg, or the "Meadow of Flowers", at an altitude of 2,730 m (8,950 ft), was developed by the British around a meadow on the northern flank of the Pir Panjal Range. The central bowl has been laid out as a golf course, one of the highest in the world. Around it are fairy-tale cottages with pine forests behind them. Gulmarg, together with **Khilanmarg**, some 300 m (984 ft) higher up in the mountains, is among India's few ski resorts. Its facilities, catering to all levels of proficiency, also include beginner courses.

Pahalgam ⑰

Srinagar district. 96 km (60 miles) E of Srinagar. 🚌 ℹ *J&K Tourism, Pahalgam Tourist Office, (01936) 243 224.*

In the valley of the Lidder river, Pahalgam is on the southern slope of the Great Himalayas. It is the base for several treks to Kishtwar and the Suru Valley *(see p147)*, and for the pilgrimage to the holy cave of **Amarnath**, the destination of several thousand Hindu pilgrims, every August.

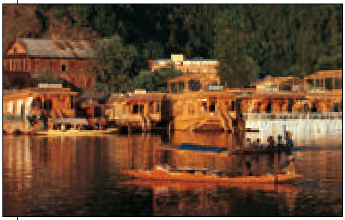
Pahalgam, dotted with mustard fields, also offers trout fishing, golf and short expeditions into the nearby mountains. The road from Srinagar to Pahalgam passes by **Pampore**, famous for its fields of saffron *(Crocus sativa)*, which has been cultivated in Kashmir since the 10th century. The saffron flower blooms in late autumn.



Mustard fields surrounding a farmhouse in Pahalgam

HOUSEBOATS AND SHIKARAS

In the 19th century, some of Srinagar's boat-dwelling community started building luxury versions of their own homes to cater to visitors. These houseboats, which remain moored in one place, have become the favoured accommodation for most visitors. Those in the deluxe class are astonishingly elaborate, their plush living rooms and bedrooms a showcase for the celebrated Kashmiri handicrafts – exquisite woodcarving, embroidery, carpets and papier mâché. Mobility between houseboat and shore is ensured by a *shikara*, a skiff propelled by a boatman with a heart-shaped paddle. Whether luxuriating in the comfort of a houseboat, or accommodated more prosaically in a hotel on dry land, there can be no more idyllic way to spend a day in Srinagar than reclining on the cushions of a *shikara* in the shade of its awning, cruising the city's lakes and backwaters.



Houseboats and *shikaras* on Dal Lake

CENTRAL INDIA

INTRODUCING CENTRAL INDIA 158–165
UTTAR PRADESH & UTTARANCHAL 166–211
BIHAR & JHARKHAND 212–225
MADHYA PRADESH & CHHATTISGARH 226–255

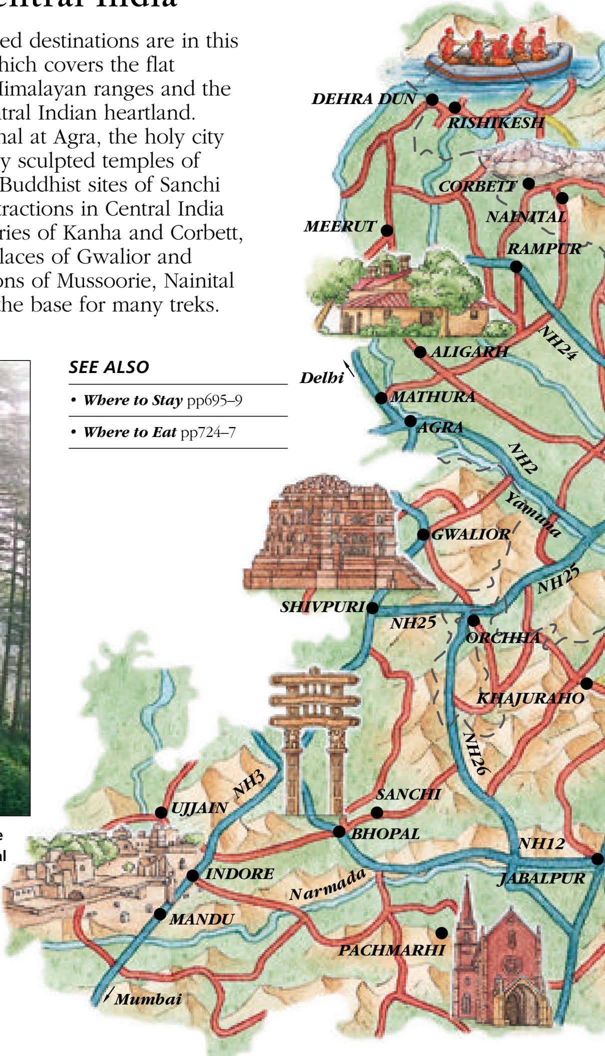
Introducing Central India

Some of India's most visited destinations are in this vast and varied region, which covers the flat Gangetic Plains, several Himalayan ranges and the verdant forests of the Central Indian heartland. These include the Taj Mahal at Agra, the holy city of Varanasi, the exquisitely sculpted temples of Khajuraho, and the great Buddhist sites of Sanchi and Bodh Gaya. Other attractions in Central India include the game sanctuaries of Kanha and Corbett, the medieval forts and palaces of Gwalior and Orchha, and the hill stations of Mussoorie, Nainital and Ranikhet, which are the base for many treks.

Luxuriant forested hills of *chir* pine and alpine meadows in Uttaranchal

SEE ALSO

- ***Where to Stay*** pp695–9
- ***Where to Eat*** pp724–7


DEHRA DUN
RISHIKESH
CORBETT
NAINITAL
MEERUT
RAMPUR
NH24
ALIGARH
Delhi
MATHURA
AGRA
NH2
Yamuna
GWALIOR
NH25
SHIVPURI
NH25
ORCHHA
KHAJURAHO
NH26
NH3
UJJAIN
SANCHI
BHOPAL
NH12
INDORE
Narmada
JABALPUR
MANDU
PACHMARHI
Mumbai

0 km 80

0 miles 80

A view of the cenotaphs of the Orchha rulers, lying along the Betwa river

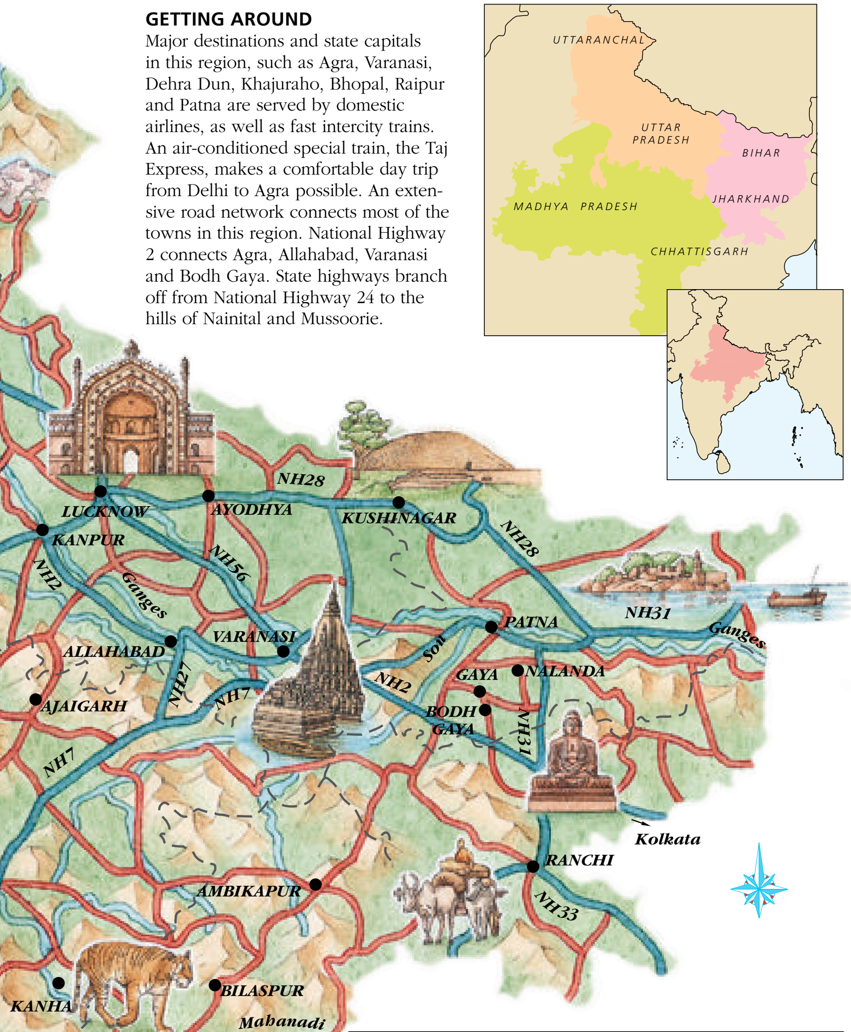
KEY

🟦	National highway
🟥	Major road
▭	River
- -	State border

◁ The glowing pastoral landscape of rural Kumaon near Mukteshwar *(see p190)*, in the Western Himalayas

GETTING AROUND

Major destinations and state capitals in this region, such as Agra, Varanasi, Dehra Dun, Khajuraho, Bhopal, Raipur and Patna are served by domestic airlines, as well as fast intercity trains. An air-conditioned special train, the Taj Express, makes a comfortable day trip from Delhi to Agra possible. An extensive road network connects most of the towns in this region. National Highway 2 connects Agra, Allahabad, Varanasi and Bodh Gaya. State highways branch off from National Highway 24 to the hills of Nainital and Mussoorie.


UTTARANCHAL
UTTAR PRADESH
BIHAR
JHARKHAND
MADHYA PRADESH
CHHATTISGARH
NH28
LUCKNOW
AYODHYA
KUSHINAGAR
KANPUR
NH2
NH56
NH28
Ganges
NH31
PATNA
Ganges
VARANASI
ALLAHABAD
Son
GAYA
NALANDA
NH27
NH7
NH2
AJAIGARH
BODH GAYA
NH31
NH7
Kolkata
RANCHI
AMBIKAPUR
NH33
KANHA
BILASPUR
Mahanadi
NH6
RAIPUR
NH16
JAGDALPUR
Hyderabad

A rustic scene in a provincial town in Bihar

A PORTRAIT OF CENTRAL INDIA

Three of India's largest states – Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh – lie in Central India. This vast and densely populated region is the country's Hindi-speaking belt (often called the "cow belt"), an area remarkable as much for its rich historical past and religious and cultural diversity as for its mineral wealth.

Detail from the great stupa at Sanchi

The River Ganges, which flows through Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Bihar, has shaped much of the history and culture of both states. On its fertile banks, civilizations, cities and empires have grown and flourished, from 1500 BC onwards *(see p41)*. Today, the river continues to play a crucial role in the economy, culture, religion as well as imagination of the millions of people who live in the surrounding Gangetic Plains.

UP is both the spiritual heartland of Hinduism and the cultural heartland of Indian Islam – the former symbolized by Varanasi, the holiest of Indian cities *(see pp202–208)*, and the latter by the Taj Mahal, the country's greatest Islamic monument *(see pp172–5)*. With a population of 148 million, UP elects more members to the Indian parliament than any other state, and therefore plays a dominant role in national politics. Six Indian prime ministers have been from here, including Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, his daughter Indira Gandhi and grandson Rajiv Gandhi and, more recently, Atal Behari Vajpayee. The tides of contemporary politics often hinge on the strength of caste and religious sentiments. One tragic result of this was the demolition of a 15th-century mosque in the town of Ayodhya in 1992, by Hindu religious extremists, because they claimed it stood at the spot where Lord Rama *(see p27)* was born. The incident led to widespread Hindu-Muslim riots and the issue continues to simmer.

In November 2000, several new states were created. In UP, the northernmost section, covering the Kumaon and Garhwal hills, became the new state of Uttaranchal. This is an area of great natural beauty, with picturesque hill stations, trekking trails, and ancient Hindu pilgrimage centres, in the shadow of towering Himalayan peaks.

The Chhota Imambara complex at Lucknow, capital of Uttar Pradesh

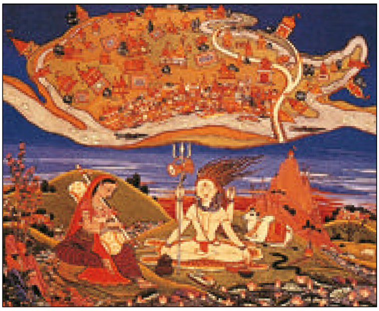
Pilgrims on the banks of the Ganges in Bihar

Bihar, like UP, is a densely populated state, and its political agenda too has in recent years been dominated by caste-based issues, at the expense of social and economic development. As a result, rural poverty is still widespread and the literacy rate remains abysmally low, at around 40 per cent. Ironically, this was a state that once had one of the ancient world's greatest universities, at Nalanda *(see pp218–9)*, and was the seat of two of India's greatest empires, the Maurya and Gupta empires *(see pp42–3)*. Bihar also occupies an important place in the history of Indian civilization, as the birthplace of Buddhism – for it was here, at Bodh Gaya *(see p222)*, that the Buddha gained enlightenment. This historic legacy can be seen in the state's famous Buddhist sites. Present-day Bihar has an earthy vitality, which can be experienced at the huge annual cattle fair at Sonepur *(see p216)*, where a prime attraction is the unique elephant bazaar.

The new state of Jharkhand, in what was southern Bihar, came into being in November 2000. An area of great natural beauty, Jharkhand comprises a forested plateau, home to a large population of tribal people with distinctive cultures, who now dominate the political and economic life of their nascent state. Jharkhand is blessed with great mineral wealth, and its rich deposits of coal and iron, in particular, ensure its future prosperity.

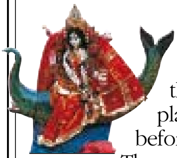
Madhya Pradesh (MP) provides a sharp contrast to the flat, crowded plains of UP and Bihar, with its varied terrain and relatively sparse population. The countryside here is an enchanting mosaic of cotton fields, craggy ravines, rolling hills, and vast tracts of forest and grassland, which are home to at least half of India's tiger population. A tragic industrial disaster in the state capital, Bhopal, in 1984 *(see p240)* has made the people of this state especially active in environmental issues, and many of them have been campaigning against a large dam on the Narmada river *(see p251)*. MP still gets relatively few visitors, yet few other states can rival its range of attractions, which include the World Heritage monuments at Sanchi *(see pp244–5)* and Khajuraho *(see pp236–8)*, and some of India's finest wildlife sanctuaries.

At the same time as Jharkhand and Uttaranchal, Chhatisgarh came into being. This southeastern part of Madhya Pradesh is a thickly forested area, populated by different tribal communities, engaged in agriculture and a variety of beautiful crafts *(see p253)*. Facilities are still being developed to welcome visitors to this fascinating part of the country.



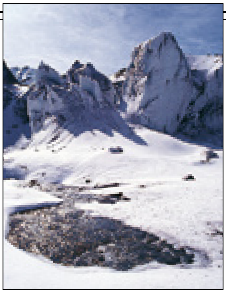
A poster depicting Varanasi as the home of Shiva

The River Ganges

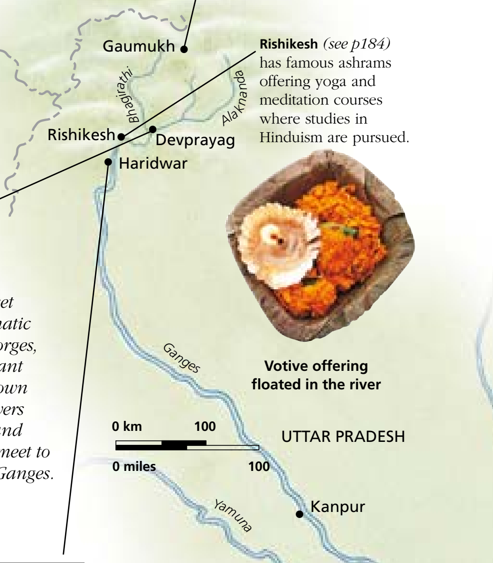


Goddess Ganga

Rising in an ice cave, 4,140 m (13,583 ft) high in the Himalayas, the Ganges flows for 2,525 km (1,569 miles) through the mountains of Uttaranchal, and the vast plains of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Bengal, before entering the sea in the Bay of Bengal. Through the ages, great civilizations have flourished on its banks, which are today lined with teeming cities, fertile paddy fields and innumerable temples and ghats. For, above all, the Ganges is India's main spiritual and religious artery, sacred to millions of Hindus who believe that to bathe in its waters is to be absolved of all sins, and to be cremated on its banks and have one's ashes immersed in its waters ensures salvation of the soul.



Gaumukh *("Cow's Mouth") at the mouth of the Gangotri Glacier, is the source of the Ganges. Emerging as an icy torrent, the river is called the Bhagirathi here.*



Rishikesh *(see p184)* has famous ashrams offering yoga and meditation courses where studies in Hinduism are pursued.

Votive offering floated in the river

Devprayag (see p187), *set amidst dramatic mountain gorges, is an important pilgrimage town where the rivers Bhagirathi and Alaknanda meet to become the Ganges.*

Haridwar, *the "Gateway to the Gods"* (see p184), *is where the Ganges finally descends from the Himalayas and begins its long journey through the plains that constitute India's heartland. Haridwar teems with temples, holy men and pilgrims, especially around its main ghat, Har-ki-Pauri, sanctified by the footprint of Lord Vishnu. It is one of the four sites where the mammoth Kumbh Mela is held every 12 years* (see p211).

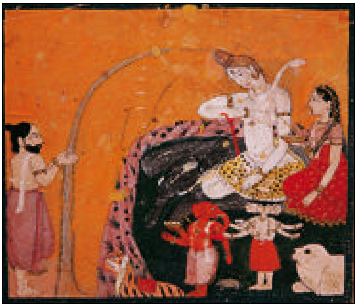
KEY

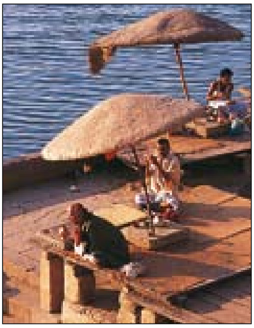
- ▬ ▬ International border
- – – State border

Allahabad

Allahabad (see p210) *marks the confluence of three holy rivers, the Ganges, the Yamuna, and the mythical Saraswati. The Kumbh Mela held here in 2001 attracted some 30 million pilgrims.*

The Myth of the Ganges *holds that the celestial River Ganga was brought to earth by sage Bhagiratha so that he could sprinkle her holy water on the ashes of his ancestors, who were struck down by Lord Vishnu for their wickedness. The river water would ensure salvation for their souls. When the Ganga descended, Lord Shiva broke her enormous force by winding her through his hair, to save the earth from being destroyed in a deluge. This myth is often depicted in paintings and sculptures.*



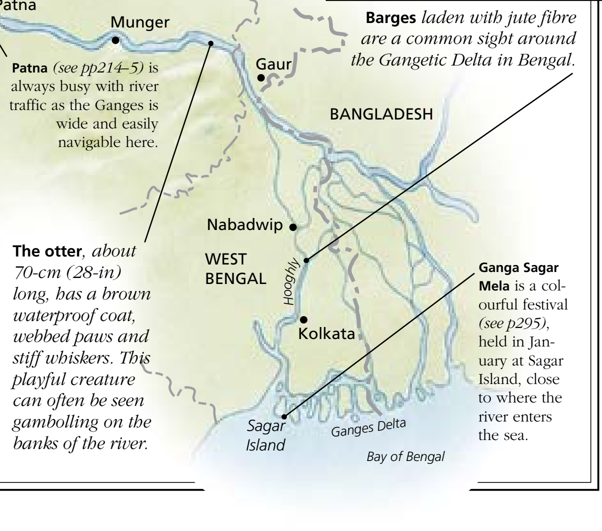


Varanasi (see pp202–208) *is regarded by Hindus as the holiest spot on this holiest of rivers. Around 90 ghats line the river front, where the living come to be purified by the waters of the Ganges, and the dead are brought to attain* moksha *(release from the endless cycle of death and rebirth).*

Fertile fields, *enriched by alluvial soil, can be seen all along the Indo-Gangetic Plains. These fields of wheat and mustard are in Bihar.*

Kanwarias *are devotees of Shiva who make an arduous annual journey every August, to the Ganges on foot, carrying back the river's sacred water in brightly decorated pots, to their temples at home.*

Barges *laden with jute fibre are a common sight around the Gangetic Delta in Bengal.*



Patna *(see pp214–5)* is always busy with river traffic as the Ganges is wide and easily navigable here.

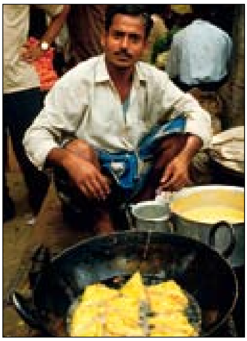
The otter, *about 70-cm (28-in) long, has a brown waterproof coat, webbed paws and stiff whiskers. This playful creature can often be seen gambolling on the banks of the river.*

Ganga Sagar Mela is a colourful festival *(see p295)*, held in January at Sagar Island, close to where the river enters the sea.

The Flavours of Central India

Since a large part of the region falls within the fertile Gangetic Plain, this area is rich in agricultural produce. Stretching across the land are endless fields of rice and wheat as well as vast dark-green mango and litchi orchards. Rice and wheat are both eaten in the so-called Hindi-speaking states, although the food differs from community to community. The two main culinary influences are the sophisticated vegetarian cuisine from the holy city of Varanasi and Lucknow's refined mutton dishes and *biryanis* that evolved in the royal kitchens.

Bay leaves, cinnamon, cardamom, cumin, cloves and turmeric



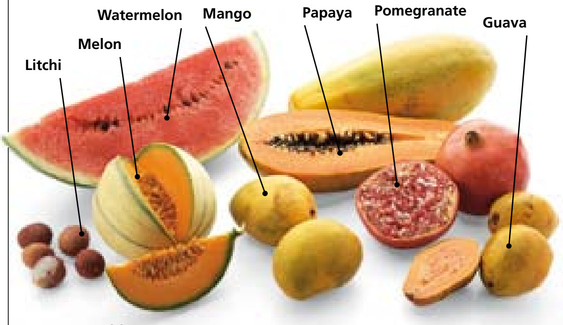
Street vendor frying *samosas*, a popular snack, in a *tawa* (wok)

UTTAR PRADESH & UTTARANCHAL

Roughly, this region has three types of cuisine: vegetarian, Muslim or nawabi and Uttaranchali. The vegetarian food of the plains is very refined, cooked in pure *ghee* (clarified butter) and tempered with asafetida, *garam masala* (curry powder), cumin and chilli powder. Uttar Pradesh's street food, such as savoury *chaat*, is famous and the best can be found in the lanes of Varanasi.

The states of Awadh (now Lucknow) and Rampur produce an unsurpassable cuisine. Traditional *Dum pukht*, where food is sealed with dough in large pots and cooked on a slow fire, is the essence of Awadhi cuisine, as is the subtle use of spices. From this region come two exquisite lamb *kebabs*: *galauti* and *kakori*, while the delicately flavoured *pulaos* (rice dishes) are legendary.

In the Himalayan state of Uttaranchal the food leans heavily on lentils, soya beans and *mundua* (buckwheat). Rice is the staple and the food is cooked in either *ghee* or mustard oil. A popular spice in this area is *bhanga* or hemp seeds.



A selection of fruits grown in Central India

LOCAL DISHES AND SPECIALITIES

Mung dal

Subtlety and refinement are the main features of both vegetarian and non-vegetarian cooking. A regular meal comprises lentils, a vegetable dish, rice or *roti* (bread) with pickles to add piquancy. Typical of Varanasi is *sattvik* or "pure" food, which is strictly vegetarian and lightly spiced, but without onions and garlic. The Muslim courts of Bhopal, Patna and Lucknow further enriched the culinary repertoire with fragrant mutton *biryanis*, rich *kormas* and succulent *kebabs*. Some of the finest sweets from this region include *jalebis* (crisp golden spirals of fried batter), rich *badam halwa* (almond sweet) and the syrup-soaked *malpua* (type of pancake). *Paan* (betel leaf) is served at the end of a hearty meal.

Savouries *include* samosas *(potato-filled turnovers) and* kachoris *(stuffed fried bread, with chutney).*

A roadside stall in Agra selling a selection of fresh vegetables

MADHYA PRADESH & CHHATTISHGARH

The food of Madhya Pradesh is as varied as the region. The princely states of Bhopal and Gwalior developed a distinctive cuisine that can be sampled in Gwalior's *barbat* (coriander (cilantro)-flavoured mutton curry), or Bhopal's *rizala* (chicken with yoghurt, green chillies and coriander). A gourmet maharaja from the small state of Sailana even produced his own cookbook, *The Cooking Delights of the Maharajas*, with recipes culled from royal kitchens.

The Malwa Plateau and the city of Indore have a wide array of savouries, sweets and thirst-quenchers that keep the city buzzing until midnight. Here, visitors can savour *bhutta ri kees* (grated corn cooked in *ghee*, milk and spices) or drink the cooling Malwa *kairi pana*, (fresh mango juice). Breads include *baati* and *bafla*, both made from wheat and shaped into balls. *Baati* is roasted and eaten with lentils while *bafla* is fried in *ghee*.

Paan **or betel leaf, often eaten as a digestive after a meal**

BIHAR & JHARKHAND

An abundance of fruits and vegetables and a simple style makes Bihar's cuisine special. A popular ingredient is *sattu* (roasted chickpea flour), which is energy-giving and nutritious. It can be made into drinks, breads or mixed with wheat, potatoes and mashed aubergine (eggplant).

The tribes of Jharkhand eat cereals and a curry of boiled vegetables, tubers or edible roots, lamb and chillies. A favourite ingredient is the flower of the *mahua (Madhuca indica)* tree which has hallucinogenic properties. It is used to flavour rice in *asur kichdi*.

ON THE MENU

Aloo dum Banarsi Spicy potatoes cooked with cottage cheese, nuts and raisins.

Kele ke kofta Green bananas mashed, made into balls and cooked in a lightly-spiced yoghurt sauce.

Kurwai biryani Steaks are used instead of pieces of mutton in this rice dish, a speciality of Madhya Pradesh.

Mawa-bati A *gulab jamun* (deep-fried milk and flour dumpling) filled with nuts.

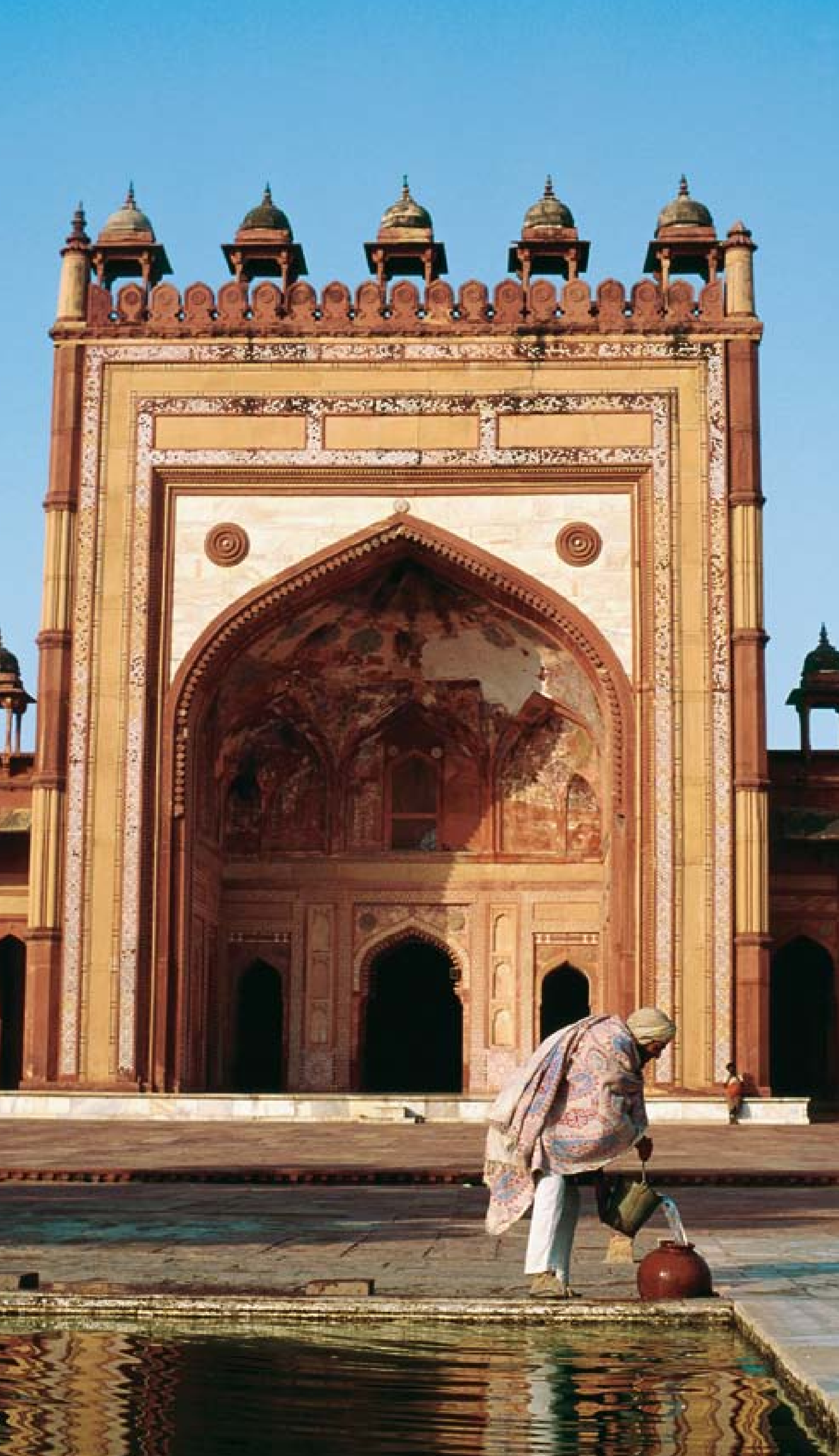
Musallam raan Leg of lamb roasted with various spices.

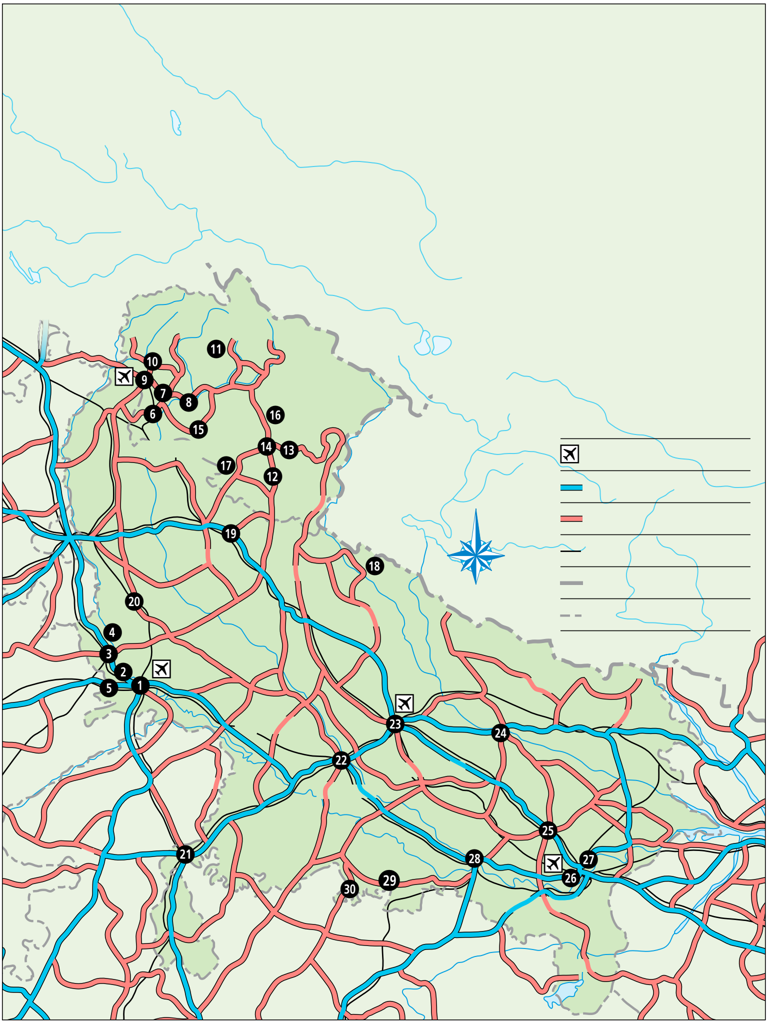
Shabdeg A classic mutton dish slow-cooked with turnips and flavoured with spices.

Mutton korma *has pieces of mutton in a yoghurt and saffron sauce, flavoured with cloves and cardamom.*

Okra *is a favourite summer vegetable, served stuffed and fried or cooked in a yoghurt sauce.*

Shahi tukra *is a royal bread pudding in a rich sauce of thickened milk, garnished with sliced almonds.*





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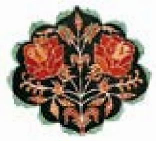
Agra ①



A *pietra dura* motif

Agra was the seat of the imperial Mughal court during the 16th and 17th centuries, before the capital was shifted to Delhi. The city, strategically located on the banks of the Yamuna and along the Grand Trunk Road, flourished under the patronage of the emperors Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jahan, attracting artisans from Persia and Central Asia, and also from other parts of India, who built luxurious forts, palaces, gardens and mausoleums. Of these, the Taj Mahal, the Agra Fort and Akbar's abandoned capital of Fatehpur Sikri have been declared World Heritage Sites by UNESCO. With the decline of the Mughals, Agra was captured by the Jats, the Marathas, and finally by the British, early in the 19th century.

Agra Fort

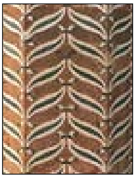
See pp170–71.

Jami Masjid

○ *daily.* ● *to non-Muslims during prayer times.*

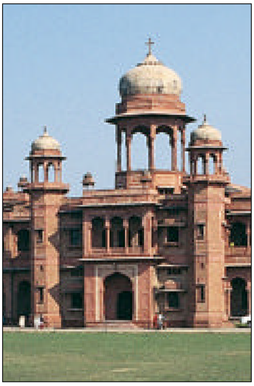
A magnificently proportioned building in the heart of the historic town, the "Friday Mosque" was sponsored by Shah Jahan's favourite daughter, Jahanara Begum, who also commissioned a number of other buildings and gardens, including the canal that once ran down Chandni Chowk *(see pp84–5)* in Delhi. Built in 1648, the mosque's sandstone and marble domes with their distinctive zigzag chevron pattern dominate this section of the town. The eastern courtyard wing was demolished by the British in 1857 *(see p53)*. Of interest are the tank with its *shahi chirag* (royal stove) for heating water within the courtyard, and the separate prayer chamber for ladies.

The area around Jami Masjid was once a vibrant meeting place, famous for its kebab houses and lively bazaars. A stroll or rickshaw ride through the narrow alleys can be a rewarding experience, offering glimpses of an older and very different way of life, reminiscent of Mughal Agra. This is also the city's crafts and trade centre where a vast array of products such as jewellery, *zari* embroidery, inlaid marble objects, *dhurries*, dried fruit, sweets, shoes and kites are available. Some of the main bazaars are Johri Bazaar, Kinari Bazaar, Kaserat Bazaar and Kashmiri Bazaar. Quieter lanes such as Panni Gali have many fine buildings, with imposing gateways leading into secluded courtyards where the thriving workshops of master craftsmen still exist.



Detail of minaret, Jami Masjid

Jami Masjid, built by Shah Jahan's favourite daughter, Jahanara



St John's College, designed by Sir Samuel Swinton Jacob

St John's College

Mahatma Gandhi Rd. ***Tel*** *(0562) 252 0123.* ○ *Mon–Sat.* ● *public hols.*

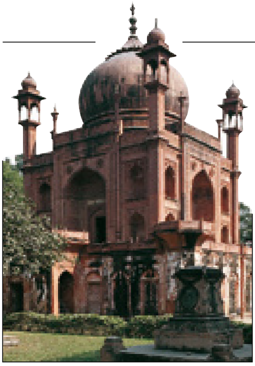
The unusual architecture of St John's College has been described as "an astounding mixture of the antiquarian, the scholarly and the symbolic". It consists of a group of red sandstone buildings, including a hall and library, arranged around a quadrangle, all designed in a quasi-Fatehpur Sikri style by Sir Samuel Swinton Jacob *(see p353)*, who perfected the Indo-Saracenic style of architecture. Started by the Church Missionary Society, the college was inaugurated in 1914 by the viceroy, Lord Hardinge, and it continues to be one of Agra's most prestigious institutions.

Roman Catholic Cemetery

Opp Civil Courts. ○ *daily.*

Towards the north of the town is the Roman Catholic Cemetery, the oldest European graveyard in North India, established in the 17th century by an Armenian merchant, Khoja Mortenepus.

A number of Islamic-style gravestones, with inscriptions in Armenian, survive today, and include those of the cannon expert, Shah Nazar Khan, and Khoja Mortenepus himself. The cemetery also contains tombs of European



John Hessing's tomb in the Roman Catholic Cemetery

missionaries, traders and adventurers such as the 18th-century French freebooter, Walter Reinhardt. The largest tomb is that of John Hessing, a British commander in the army of the Scindias, the rulers of Gwalior *(see p228)*. Hessing's red sandstone tomb, built after his death in 1803, is modelled on the lines of the Taj Mahal. One of the oldest tombs belongs to the English merchant, John Mildenhall (1614), envoy of Elizabeth I, who arrived at the Mughal court in 1603 seeking permission to trade. Other interesting graves include those of the Venetian doctor, Bernardino Maffi, and Geronimo Veroneo (once wrongly regarded by some as the architect of the Taj). Near the chapel, an obelisk marks the grave of the four children of General Perron, French commander of the Scindia forces. Another Frenchman, Jean Philippe Bourbon, a kinsman of Henry IV of France, is also buried here.

🚉 Fort Railway Station

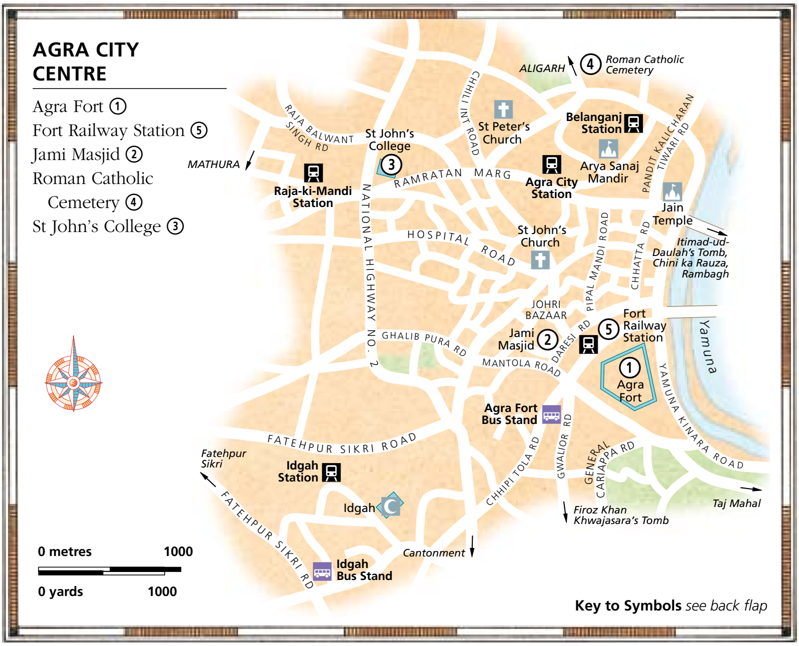
Tel *(0562) 236 4131.*

This memorable Raj building was constructed in 1891 as a stopping-off point for colonial tourists visiting Agra's monuments. The octagonal bazaar *chowk* that originally connected the Delhi Gate and Agra Fort to the old city and the Jami Masjid was demolished and this station, with its French château-style slate-roofed platforms, was built in its place. It is still in use today. Agra's two other railway stations are located in the cantonment and at Raja ki Mandi.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Agra district. 223 km (139 miles) SE of Delhi. 👥 *1,160,000.* ✈ *Kheria, 8 km (5 miles) NE of city centre.* 🚉 *Agra Cantonment, (0562) 236 8598; Raja ki Mandi, (0562) 235 4477; Fort.* 🚌 *Idgah, (0562) 236 4557.* ℹ *UPTDC, 64 Taj Rd, (0562) 236 0517; ITDC, 191 Mall Rd, (0562) 222 6368.* 🎉 *Kailash Fair (Aug/Sep).*

Auto-rickshaws parked outside the Fort Railway Station


AGRA CITY CENTRE
Agra Fort ①
Fort Railway Station ⑤
Jami Masjid ②
Roman Catholic Cemetery ④
St John's College ③
ALIGARH
④ Roman Catholic Cemetery
RAJA BALWANT SINGH RD
St John's College
③
CHHILI INT ROAD
St Peter's Church
Belanganj Station
PANDIT KALICHARAN TIWARI RD
MATHURA
Raja-ki-Mandi Station
RAMRATAN MARG
Agra City Station
Arya Sanaj Mandir
Jain Temple
NATIONAL HIGHWAY NO. 2
HOSPITAL ROAD
St John's Church
PIPAL MANDI ROAD
CHHATTA RD
Itimad-ud-Daulah's Tomb, Chini ka Rauza, Rambagh
JOHRI BAZAAR
Jami Masjid ②
DARESI RD
⑤ Fort Railway Station
Yamuna
GHALIB PURA RD
MANTOLA ROAD
① Agra Fort
YAMUNA KINARA ROAD
Agra Fort Bus Stand
GWALIOR RD
FATEHPUR SIKRI ROAD
GENERAL CARIAPPA RD
Fatehpur Sikri
Idgah Station
CHHIPI TOLA RD
Idgah
Taj Mahal
Firoz Khan Khwajasara's Tomb
FATEHPUR SIKRI RD
Cantonment
Idgah Bus Stand
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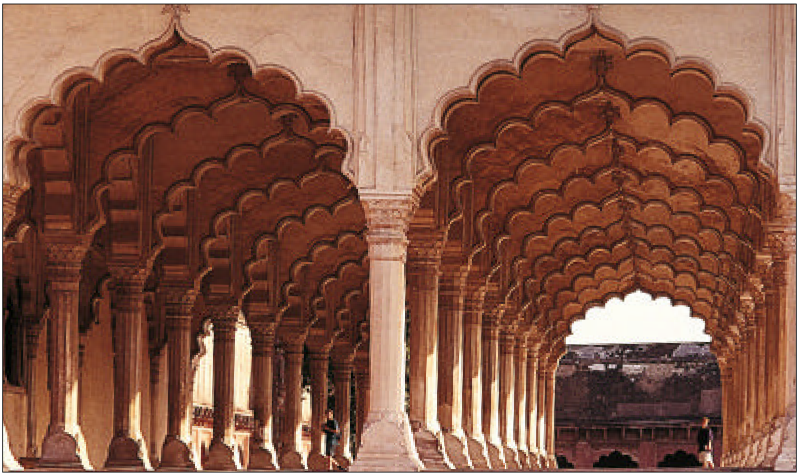
Key to Symbols see back flap



The colonnaded arches of the Diwan-i-Aam, the hall used for the emperor's public audiences

Agra Fort

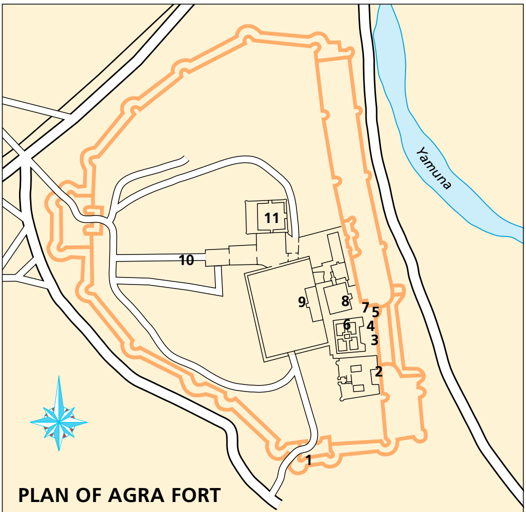
○ *daily.* *free on Fri.*

Son et Lumière *7:30pm daily.*

Situated on the west bank of the Yamuna, Agra Fort was built by Emperor Akbar between 1565 and 1573. Its imposing red sandstone ramparts form a crescent along the river front, and encompass an enormous complex of courtly buildings, ranging in style from the early eclecticism of Akbar to the sublime elegance of Shah Jahan. The barracks to the north are 19th-century British additions. A deep moat, once filled with water from the Yamuna, surrounds the fort.

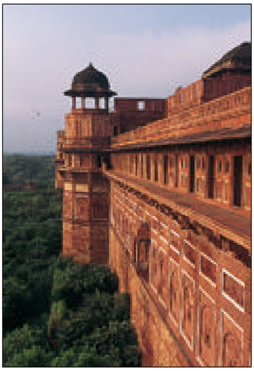
The impressive **Amar Singh Gate**, to the south, leads into the fort. To its right is the so-called **Jahangiri Mahal**, the only major palace in the fort that dates back to Akbar's reign. This complex arrangement of halls, courtyards and galleries, with dungeons underneath, was the zenana or main harem. In front of the Jahangiri Mahal is a large marble pool which, according to legend, used to be filled in Nur Jahan's time with thousands of rose petals so that the empress could bathe in its scented waters.

Along the river front are the **Khas Mahal**, an elegant marble hall with a vividly painted ceiling, characteristic of Shah Jahan's style of architecture, and two golden pavilions with *bangaldar* roofs (curved roofs derived from Bengali



PLAN OF AGRA FORT

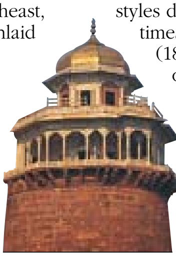
1 Amar Singh Gate
2 Jahangiri Mahal
3 Khas Mahal and Anguri Bagh
4 Sheesh Mahal
5 Musamman Burj
6 Mina Masjid
7 Diwan-i-Khas
8 Machchhi Bhavan
9 Courtyard of the Diwan-i-Aam
10 Nagina Masjid
11 Moti Masjid



A riverside view of the Jahangiri Mahal, the emperor's main harem

St George's Church in Agra Cantonment, built in 1826

huts). These pavilions were once associated with the princesses Jahanara and Roshanara, and have narrow niches which could have been used to conceal jewels. Facing them is **Anguri Bagh** (“Grape Garden”) with its lily-pools and candle-niches. The **Sheesh Mahal** and royal baths are to the northeast, near the gloriously inlaid **Musamman Burj**, a double-storeyed octagonal tower with clear views of the Taj. This was where Shah Jahan, imprisoned by his son Aurangzeb, spent the last years of his life. **Mina Masjid** (“Gem Mosque”), probably the smallest in the world and the emperor's private mosque, is nearby. Next to Musamman Burj is the **Diwan-i-Khas**, a lavishly decorated open hall with fine *pietra dura* work on its columns, where the emperor would meet his court. Two thrones, in white marble and black slate, were placed on the terrace so that the emperor could watch the elephant fights below. Opposite is the **Machchhi Bhavan** (“Fish House”), once a magnificent water palace. To its west is the **Diwan-i-Aam**, an arcaded hall within a courtyard. Its throne-alcove of inlaid marble provided a sumptuous setting for the fabled Peacock Throne. To the northwest is the **Nagina Masjid** (“Jewel Mosque”) built by Shah Jahan for his harem, and the **Moti Masjid** (“Pearl Mosque”).



Musamman Burj

Cantonment

Enclosed by Mahatma Gandhi Rd, Grand Parade Rd & Mall Rd.

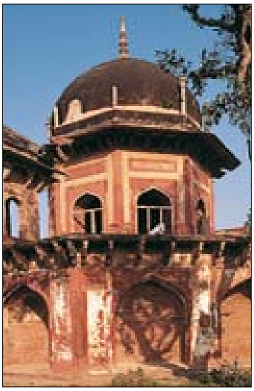
The pleasant, tree-shaded army cantonment area, with its own railway station and orderly avenues has many interesting public buildings, churches, cemeteries and bungalows in a medley of styles dating from colonial times. **St George's Church** (1826), a plastered, ochre-coloured building was designed by Colonel JT Boileau, architect of Shimla's Christ Church *(see p110)*. **Havelock Memorial Church**, constructed in 1873 in a “trim Classical style”, commemorates one of the British generals of the Indian Mutiny of 1857. Other buildings in this area include **Queen Mary's Library**, the **Central Post Office** and the **Circuit House**, which used to accommodate Raj officials.

Firoz Khan Khwajasara's Tomb

S of Agra, on Gwalior Rd. ○ *daily.*

A signpost on the Gwalior Road indicates the turning to this unusual 17th-century octagonal structure, standing on the edge of a lake. This marks the spot where Firoz Khan Khwajasara, a natural-born eunuch and the custodian of Shah Jahan's palace harem, is buried.

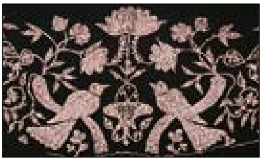
The red sandstone edifice stands on a high plinth and has a gateway attached to the main building. Steps lead to the upper storey where a central pavilion containing the grave is located. Highly stylized stone carvings embellish the surface. Interestingly, unlike other buildings of the period, there is an absence of calligraphic inscriptions. If the tomb is closed, the watchman from the village will open the gate.



A view of the 17th-century tomb of Firoz Khan Khwajasara

GOLD THREAD AND BEAD ZARDOZI

Agra's flourishing traditional craft of elaborate gold thread *(zari)* and bead embroidery is known as *zardozi*. This technique was Central Asian in origin and came to the region with the Mughal emperors. Local craftsmen in the old city developed further refinements and complex new patterns to create garments and accessories for the imperial court. However, with the decline of court patronage, the skill languished and almost vanished. It owes its recent revival to encouragement from contemporary fashion designers.

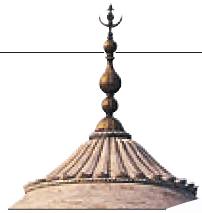


Detail of an embroidered textile

Agra: Taj Mahal

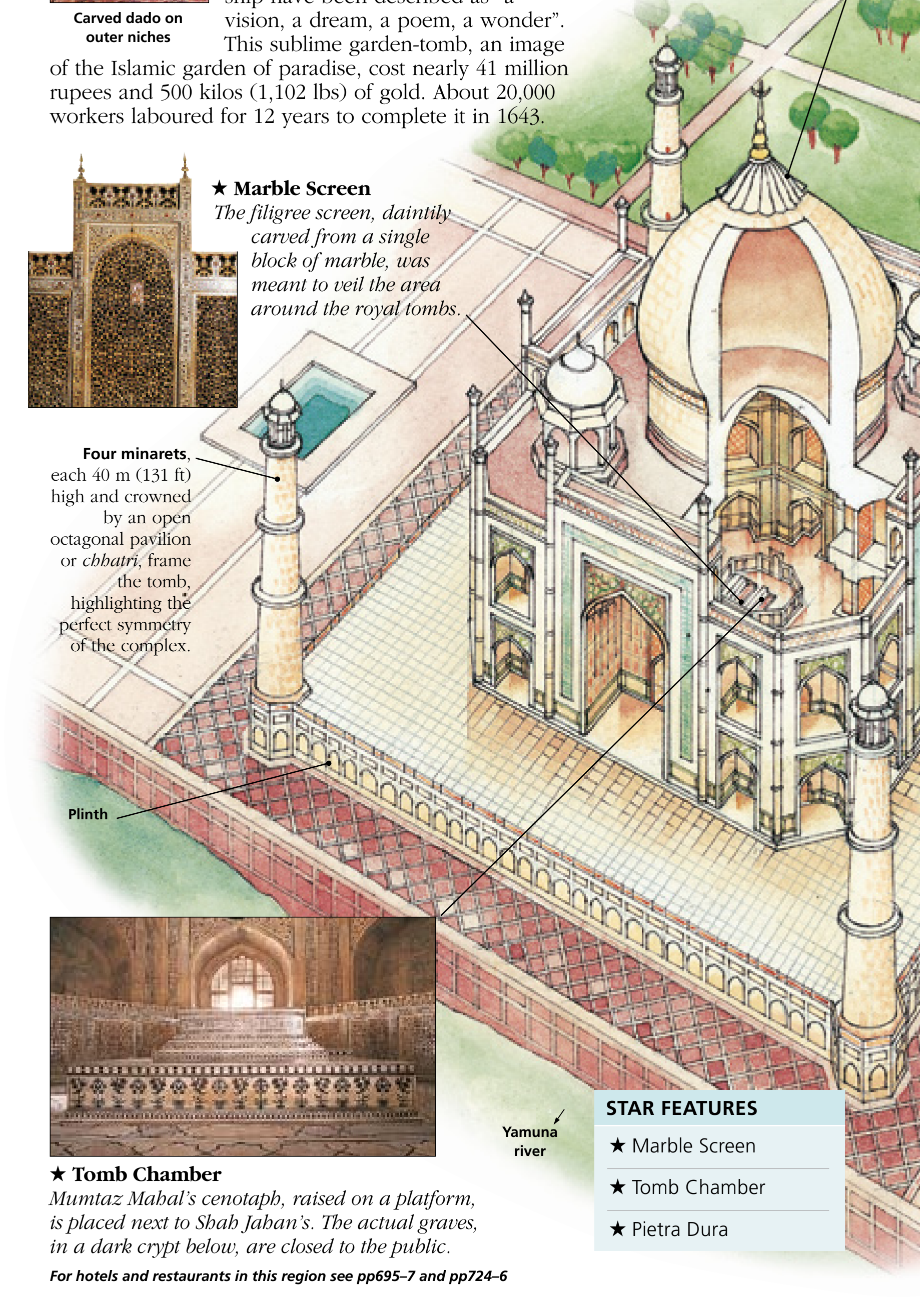
Carved dado on outer niches

One of the world's most famous buildings, the Taj Mahal was built by the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan in memory of his favourite wife, Mumtaz Mahal, who died in 1631. Its perfect proportions and exquisite craftsmanship have been described as "a vision, a dream, a poem, a wonder". This sublime garden-tomb, an image of the Islamic garden of paradise, cost nearly 41 million rupees and 500 kilos (1,102 lbs) of gold. About 20,000 workers laboured for 12 years to complete it in 1643.



The Dome

The 44-m (144-ft) double dome is capped with a finial.



★ Marble Screen

The filigree screen, daintily carved from a single block of marble, was meant to veil the area around the royal tombs.

Four minarets, each 40 m (131 ft) high and crowned by an open octagonal pavilion or *chhatri*, frame the tomb, highlighting the perfect symmetry of the complex.

Plinth

Yamuna river

★ Tomb Chamber

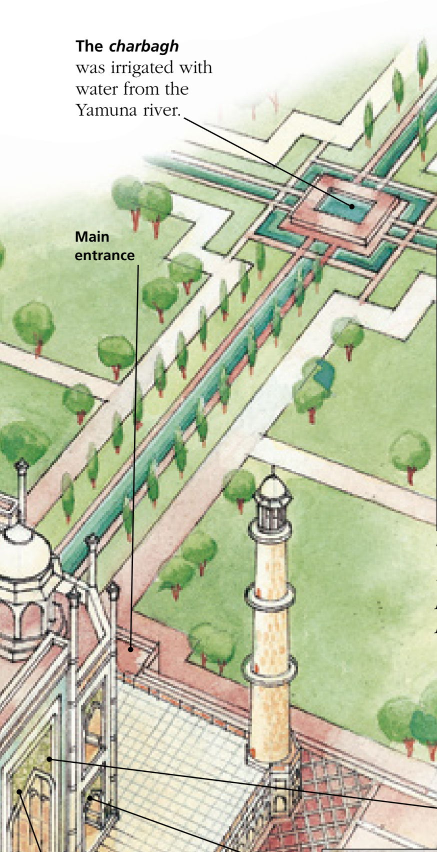
Mumtaz Mahal's cenotaph, raised on a platform, is placed next to Shah Jahan's. The actual graves, in a dark crypt below, are closed to the public.

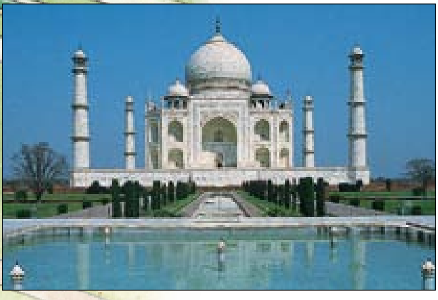
STAR FEATURES

- ★ Marble Screen
- ★ Tomb Chamber
- ★ Pietra Dura

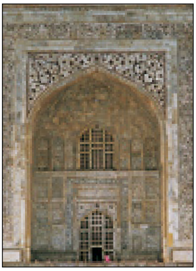
VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Tajganj. **Tel** *(0562) 233 0496.*
○ *6am–7pm Sun–Thu.*
● *Fri.*
Taj Mahotsava (Feb).
Museum ○ *10am–5pm Tue–Thu.* ● *public hols.*


The *charbagh* was irrigated with water from the Yamuna river.
Main entrance



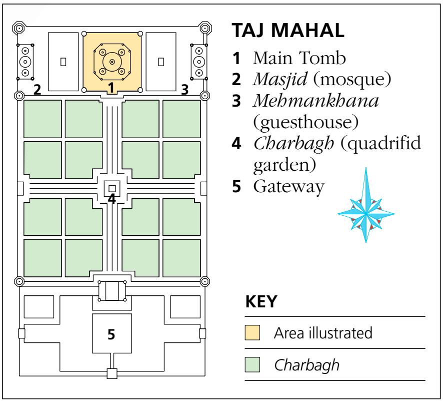
The Lotus Pool
Named after its lotus-shaped fountain spouts, the pool reflects the tomb. Almost every visitor is photographed sitting on the marble bench here.



Pishtaq
Recessed arches provide depth while their inlaid panels reflect the changing light to give the tomb a mystical aura.

★ Pietra Dura
Inspired by the paradise garden, intricately carved floral designs inlaid with precious stones embellish the austere white marble surface to give it the look of a bejewelled casket.

Calligraphic Panels
The size of the Koranic verses increases as the arch gets higher, creating the subtle optical illusion of a uniformly flowing script.



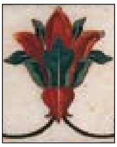
TAJ MAHAL

1 Main Tomb
2 *Masjid* (mosque)
3 *Mehmankhana* (guesthouse)
4 *Charbagh* (quadrifid garden)
5 Gateway

KEY

🟨	Area illustrated
🟩	*Charbagh*

Decorative Elements of the Taj



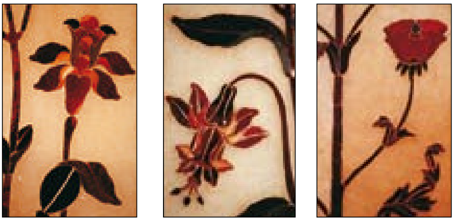
Stylized floral motif

It is widely believed that the Taj Mahal was designed to represent an earthly replica of one of the houses of paradise. Its impeccable marble facing, embellished by a remarkable use of exquisite surface design, is a showcase for the refined aesthetic that reached its height during Shah Jahan's reign. Described as "one of the most elegant and harmonious buildings in the world", the Taj indeed manifests the wealth and luxury of Mughal art as seen in architecture and garden design, painting, jewellery, calligraphy, textiles, carpet-weaving and furniture.

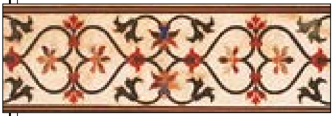
Detail of the marble screen with an inlaid chrysanthemum

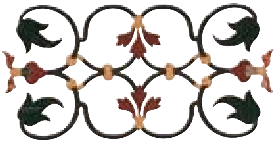
PIETRA DURA

The Mughals were great naturalists and believed that flowers were the "symbols of the divine realm". In the Taj, *pietra dura* has been extensively used to translate naturalistic forms into decorative patterns that complement the majesty of its architecture.

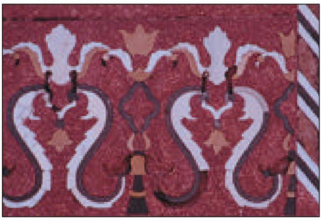


Flowers *such as the tulip, lily, iris, poppy and narcissus were depicted as sprays or in arabesque patterns. Stones of varying degrees of colour were used to create the shaded effects.*





Marble inlay above the mosque's central arch



White marble, black slate and yellow, red and grey sandstone used for decoration

THE ART OF PIETRA DURA

The Florentine technique of *pietra dura* is said to have been imported by Emperor Jahangir and developed in Agra as *pachikari*. Minute slivers of precious and semi-precious stones, such as carnelian, lapis lazuli, turquoise and malachite, were arranged in complex stylized floral designs set into a marble base. Even today, artisans in the old city maintain pattern books with the fine motifs used on the Taj to recreate 17th-century designs in contemporary pieces.

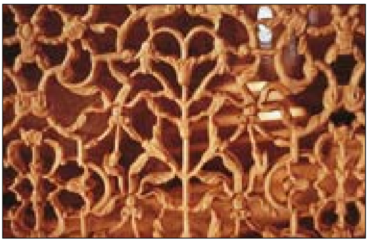
A contemporary marble inlaid platter

A single flower, often with more than 35 variations of carnelian

CARVED RELIEF WORK

Decorative panels of flowering plants, foliage and vases are realistically carved on the lower portions of the walls. While the *pietra dura* adds colour to the pristine white marble, these highlight the texture of the polished marble and sandstone surface.

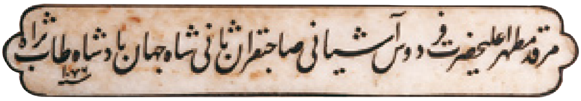
Floral sprays, *carved in relief on the marble and sandstone dado levels, are framed with* pietra dura *and stone inlay borders. The profusion of floral motifs in the Taj symbolizes the central paradise theme.*



Jali patterns *on the octagonal perforated screen surrounding the tombs are a complex combination of the geometric and floral. The filtered light captures the intricate designs and casts mosaic-like shadows on the tombs.*

CALLIGRAPHY

Inlaid calligraphy in black marble was used as a form of ornamentation on undecorated surfaces. The exquisitely detailed panels of inscribed Koranic passages, that line the recessed arches like banners, were designed by the Persian calligrapher, Amanat Khan.



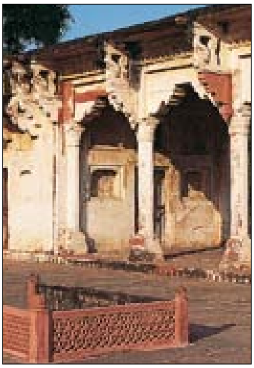
Exploring Agra: the East Bank

The picturesque east bank of the Yamuna is dotted with historic gardens, palaces, pavilions and the exquisite tomb of **Itimad-ud-Daulah**. North of Itimad-ud-Daulah is **Chini ka Rauza**, (literally "China Tomb", after its tiled exterior) built by Afzal Khan, a poet-scholar from Shiraz (Persia) who was Shah Jahan's finance minister. This large square structure is Persian in style, and at one time its surface was covered with glazed tiles from Lahore and Multan, interspersed with graceful calligraphic panels. The burial chamber within has painted stucco plaster designs that must have complemented the tiled exterior.

Lying further upriver is the quiet, tree-shaded **Rambagh** or Aram Bagh ("Garden of Rest"). This is believed to be the earliest Mughal garden, laid out by Babur, the first Mughal emperor, in 1526. The garden also served as his temporary burial place before his body was taken to Kabul to be interred. The spacious walled garden, divided by walkways that lead to a raised terrace with open pavilions overlooking the river, was further developed by the empress Nur Jahan.

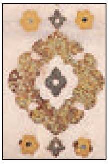
Chini ka Rauza
1 km (0.6 miles) N of Itimad-ud-Daulah's Tomb. ○ *daily.* 🎟

Rambagh
3 km (2 miles) N of Itimad-ud-Daulah's Tomb. ○ *daily.* 🎟 *free on Fri.*



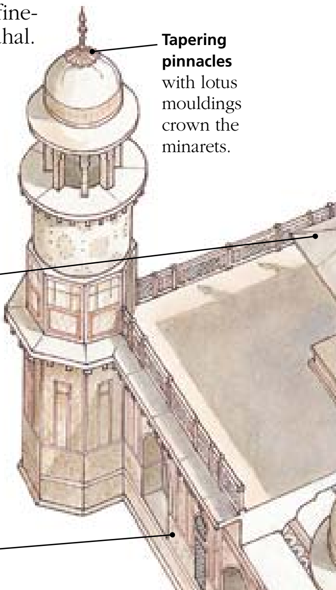
Riverside pavilion at Rambagh

Agra: Itimad-ud-Daulah's Tomb

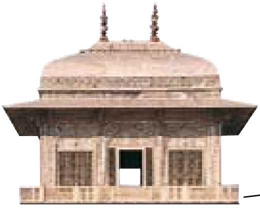


A stylized floral motif

Lyrically described as a "jewel box in marble", the small yet elegant garden-tomb of Itimad-ud-Daulah, the "Lord Treasurer" of the Mughal empire, was built by his daughter Nur Jahan, Jahangir's favourite wife. Begun in 1622, it took six years to complete. The tomb is a combination of white marble, coloured mosaic, stone inlay and lattice work. Stylistically, this is the most innovative 17th-century Mughal building and marks the transition from the robust, red sandstone architecture of Akbar to the sensuous refinement of Shah Jahan's Taj Mahal.



Tapering pinnacles with lotus mouldings crown the minarets.



Upper Pavilion

The replica tombs of Itimad-ud-Daulah and his wife are placed in the marble-screened upper pavilion.

Mosaic Patterns

Panels of geometric designs, created by inlaid coloured stones, decorate the dado level of the tomb.

★ Marble Screens

Perforated marble screens with complex ornamental patterns are carved out of a single slab of marble.

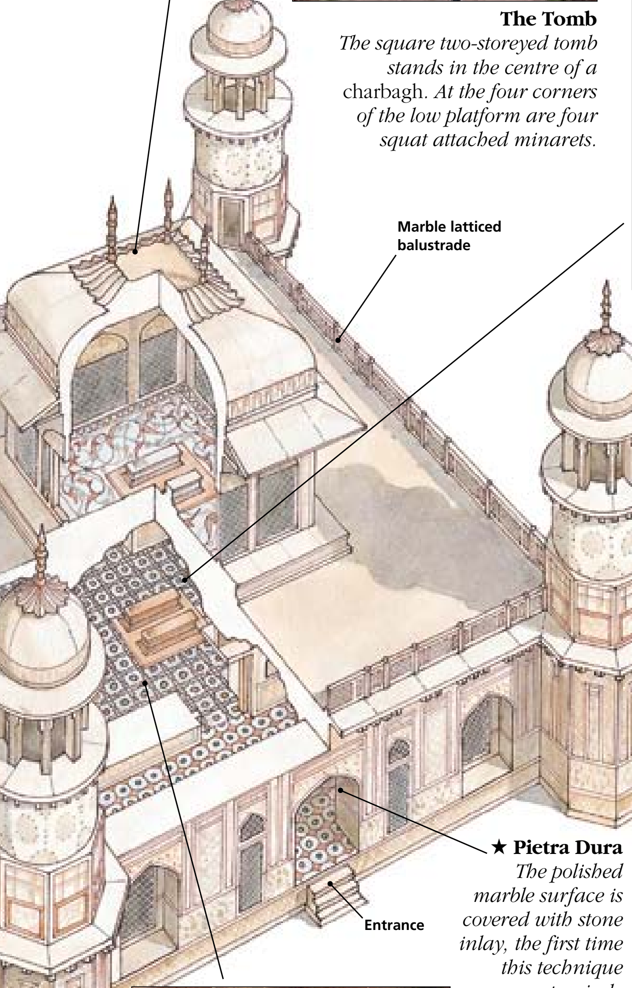
STAR FEATURES

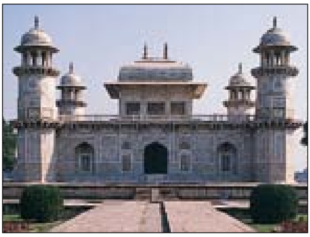
- ★ Marble Screens
- ★ Tomb Chamber
- ★ Pietra Dura

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

E bank of Yamuna. 4 km (2 miles) upstream from the Taj Mahal. ○ *sunrise–sunset daily.*

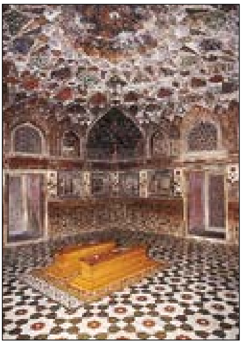
The dome, with its canopy-like shape, is different from the conventional domes of this period.





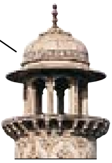
The Tomb

The square two-storeyed tomb stands in the centre of a charbagh. *At the four corners of the low platform are four squat attached minarets.*



★ Tomb Chamber

The ceiling has incised, painted and gilded stucco and stalactite patterns. The yellow marble caskets appear as if carved out of wood.

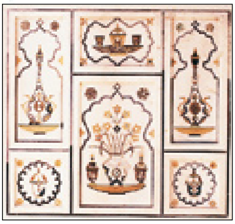


Chhatri

Open-pillared domed pavilions top the minarets.

★ Pietra Dura

The polished marble surface is covered with stone inlay, the first time this technique was extensively used in Mughal architecture.



Painted Floral Patterns

Niches with painted floral bouquets, trees, fruit and wine decanters embellish the interior of the central chamber of the main tomb.

The entrance to Akbar's mausoleum at Sikandra

Sikandra ❷

Agra district. 8 km (5 miles) NW of Agra. 🚌 **Akbar's Mausoleum** ***Tel*** *(0562) 264 1230 (contact for permission to go to the tomb terrace).* ○ *daily.* 🎫 *free on Fri.* 🛍 📷 🎉 *Urs at Akbar's Tomb (mid-Oct).*

The Mughal Emperor Akbar is buried in this small village on the outskirts of Agra. It is believed that Akbar designed and started the construction of his own mausoleum, which was modified and completed by his son Jahangir. The result is this impressive, perfectly symmetrical complex, with the tomb located in the centre of a vast walled garden. The main gateway, to the south, is a magnificent red sandstone structure with a colossal central arch, finished with an exuberant polychrome mosaic of inlaid white marble, black slate and coloured stone. On each corner are four graceful marble minarets, considered to be the forerunners of those that can be seen at the Taj Mahal in Agra *(see pp172–3).*

The large garden, where monkeys frolic, is a typical *charbagh*, an enclosed garden divided into four quarters (representing the four quarters of life) by a system of raised walkways, sunken groves and water channels.

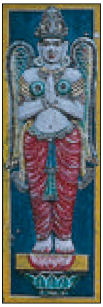
The main tomb is a distinct departure from the conventional domed structure of the tomb of Akbar's father, Humayun, at Delhi *(see p83).* The first three storeys of this majestic, four-tiered composition, consist of red sandstone pavilions. Above them is an exquisite marble-screened terrace enclosing the replica tomb, which is profusely carved with floral and arabesque designs, Chinese cloud patterns and the 99 names of Allah.

The upper levels, previously accessible through special permission, are now closed due to security reasons.

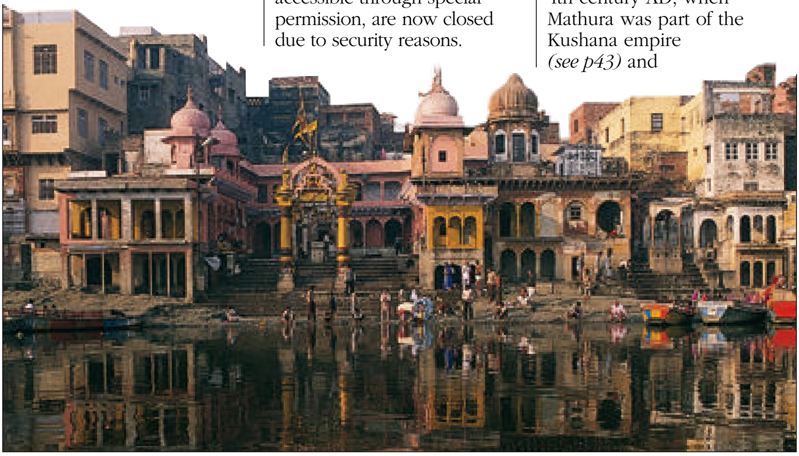
Mathura ❸

Mathura district. 62 km (39 miles) NW of Agra. 👥 *299,000.* 🚆 🚌 ℹ *Old Bus Stand, (0565) 240 6468.* 🎉 *Holi (Mar), Hariyali Teej (Jul), Janmashtami (Jul/Aug), Kansa Vadha (Sep), Annakut (Sep/Oct).*

Mathura, on the west bank of Yamuna river, is revered as the birthplace of one of India's most popular gods, Lord Krishna. A dark, cell-like room in the rather modern **Sri Krishna Janmabhoomi Temple**, on the periphery of the city, is reputed to be the actual site of his birth. Further away, along the river front, Mathura's 25 ghats form a splendid network of temples, pavilions, trees and stone steps leading down to the water. The **Jami Masjid**, with its striking tilework, lies behind the river front. A charming oddity is the Roman Catholic **Church of the Sacred Heart**, built in 1860, in the army cantonment. It combines Western elements with details taken from local temple architecture. The **Government Museum** has a superb collection of sculpture in the distinctive local white-flecked red sandstone. These date from about the 5th century BC until the 4th century AD, when Mathura was part of the Kushana empire *(see p43)* and



A religious image, Mathura



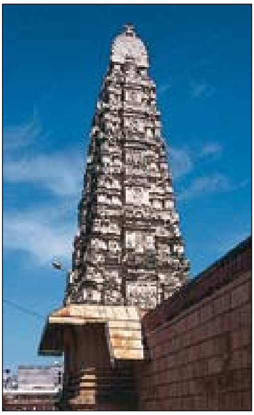
Vishram Ghat at Mathura, where every evening at sunset oil lamps are floated on the river

flourished as a major centre of Buddhism. Outstanding pieces include a Standing Buddha, and the famous headless statue of the great Kushana king, Kanishka.

Government Museum
Dampier Nagar. ***Tel*** *(0565) 250 0847.*
○ *Tue–Sun.* ● *public hols.*
extra charges.

Brindavan ④

Mathura district. 68 km (42 miles) N of Agra. *daily.* *Holi (Mar), Rath ka Mela (Mar), Hariyali Teej (Jul), Janmashtami (Jul/Aug).*



Gopura **of the South Indian-style Ranganathji Temple**

Situated along the Yamuna, Brindavan ("Forest of Fragrant Basil") is an important pilgrim centre for devout Hindus who believe that the young Krishna once lived here as a humble cowherd and romanced the beautiful milkmaid Radha. Their love is widely celebrated in dance, art and literature. Brindavan's numerous temples, ashrams and ghats were mainly built by Hindu kings and rich merchants. Many Hindu widows, clad in white with their heads shaven, live in ashrams here, devoting their lives to the worship of Krishna. At the edge of the town is the historic **Govindeoji Temple** *(see p352)*, built in 1590 by Raja Man Singh I of Amber. Across is the 19th-century **Sri Ranganathji Temple** with a gold-plated ritual pillar and an interesting museum of temple treasures.

Amidst the narrow streets of the old town are the sacred walled groves of **Seva Kunj**, associated with the traditional Raslila dance which narrates the life of Krishna. Other notable temples in Brindavan include the red sandstone **Madan Mohan Temple**, built in 1580, which stands on a hill next to the river, the popular **Banke Bihari Temple**, near the main bazaar, and the 16th-century **Jugal Kishore Temple**. The **ISKCON Temple**, on the outskirts of the town, is a more recent addition to Brindavan.

THE GRAND TRUNK ROAD

A roadside *dhaba*

The Grand Trunk Road, Rudyard Kipling's "stately corridor" that linked Calcutta (now Kolkata) in the east with Kabul in the northwest, was laid out by Sher Shah Sur *(see p79)* in the 16th century. In those days, it resounded with the movement of armies on campaign, and in times of peace, with the pomp and pageantry that accompanied the Mughal emperors as their court moved from Agra to Delhi. This remains one of Asia's great roads and North India's premier highway. Some ancient shade-giving trees still stand, but the old caravanserais are now in ruins. Instead, at frequent intervals along the highway, there are *dhabas* where long-distance travellers, especially lorry-drivers, can stop for a cheap and filling meal of *dal* and *roti*, washed down with hot tea or cooling *lassi*. They can also snatch a quick nap on string cots *(charpoys)* thoughtfully provided by *dhaba* owners.

FESTIVALS OF UTTAR PRADESH & UTTARANCHAL

International Yoga Week *(Feb),* Rishikesh. Yoga is taught on the banks of the Ganges during this rejuvenating week-long festival.
Taj Mahotsava *(Feb),* Agra. This ten-day cultural fiesta of music and dance is held in the vicinity of the Taj Mahal.
Jhansi Festival *(Feb),* Jhansi. A five-day arts and crafts extravaganza unfolds against the backdrop of Jhansi's historic fort.
Rang Gulal *(Feb/Mar).* The festival of colours, also known as Holi, is played with great abandon all over Uttar Pradesh.

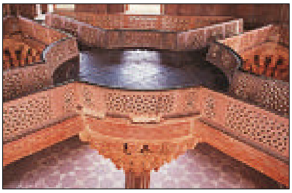
Rang Gulal celebrations

Janmashtami *(Aug/Sep),* Brindavan and Mathura. To mark the birth of Krishna, pilgrims perform a circumambulation *(parikrama)* of sacred sites. Festivities reach a peak at midnight.
Ganga Festival *(Oct/Nov),* Varanasi. The ancient glory of the Ganges is celebrated by devotees, who pay homage to the sacred river.
Lucknow Mahotsava *(Nov/Dec),* Lucknow. Lucknow's historic past and continuing traditions are celebrated with food, crafts, music and dance.
Buddha Mahotsava *(Dec),* Sarnath and Kushinagar. Religious festivities mark the Buddha's birth, attainment of enlightenment and death. These are held at Sarnath, where he preached his first sermon, and at Kushinagar, where he attained nirvana.

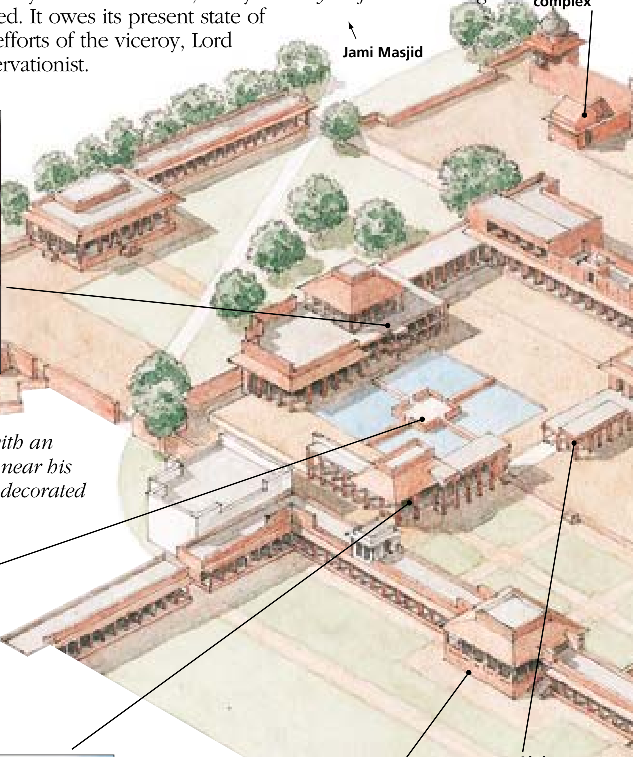
Fatehpur Sikri ❺

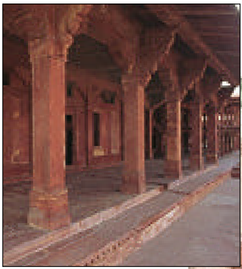
Fretwork *jali*

Built by Emperor Akbar between 1571 and 1585 in honour of Salim Chishti, a famous Sufi saint of the Chishti order *(see p376)*, Fatehpur Sikri was the Mughal capital for 14 years. A fine example of a Mughal walled city with defined private and public areas and imposing gateways, its architecture, a blend of Hindu and Islamic styles, reflects Akbar's secular vision as well as his style of governance. After the city was abandoned, some say for lack of water, many of its treasures were plundered. It owes its present state of preservation to the initial efforts of the viceroy, Lord Curzon, a legendary conservationist.



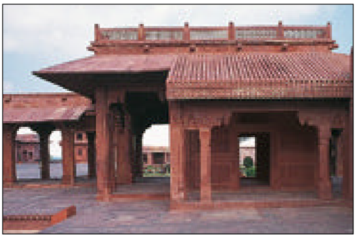
Pillar in the Diwan-i-Khas
The central axis of Akbar's court, supported by carved brackets, was inspired by Gujarati buildings.



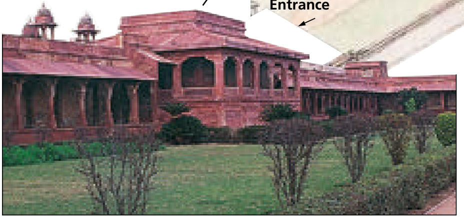


Khwabgah
The emperor's private sleeping quarters, with an ingenious ventilating shaft near his bed, lie within this lavishly decorated "Chamber of Dreams".

Anoop Talao is a pool associated with Akbar's renowned court musician Tansen *(see p228)* who, as legend says, could light oil lamps with his magical singing.



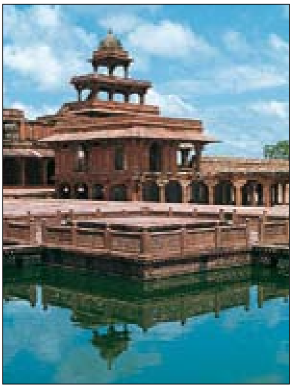
★ Turkish Sultana's House
The fine dado panels and delicately sculpted walls of this ornate sandstone pavilion make the stone seem like wood. It is topped with an unusual stone roof of imitation clay tiles.



Diwan-i-Aam
This large courtyard with an elaborate pavilion was originally draped with rich tapestries and was used for public hearings and celebrations.

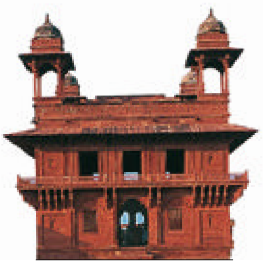
VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Agra district. 37 km (23 miles) W of Agra. ℹ *UPTDC, 64 Taj Rd, Agra, (0562) 236 0517.* ○ *daily.* 📷 *extra charges for video photography.*



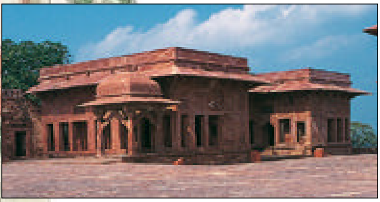
★ Panch Mahal

This five-storeyed open sandstone pavilion, overlooking the Pachisi Court, is where Akbar's queens and their attendants savoured the cool evening breezes. Its decorative screens were probably stolen after the city was abandoned.



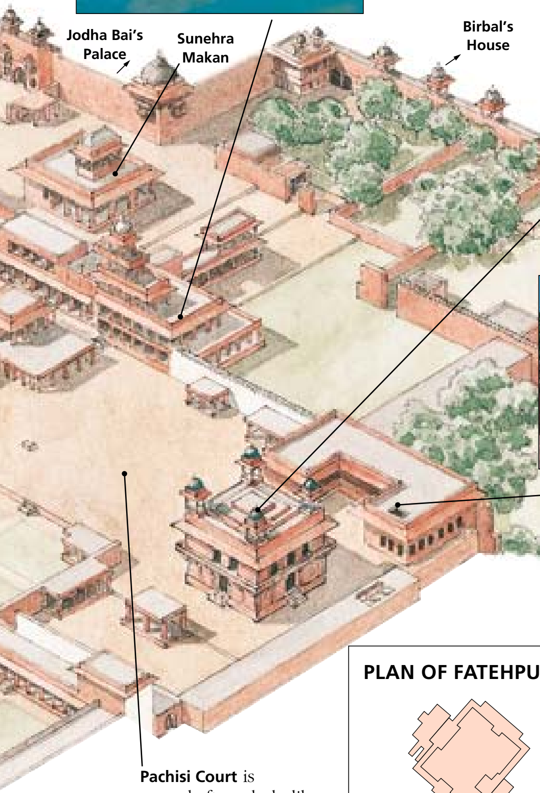
★ Diwan-i-Khas

This hall for private audience and debate is a unique fusion of different architectural styles and religious motifs.



Ankh Michauli

Sometimes identified as the treasury, this building has mythical guardian beasts carved on its stone struts. Its name means "blind man's buff".

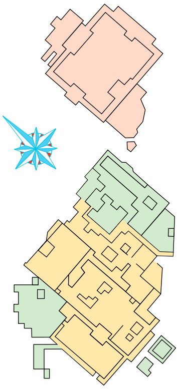


Pachisi Court is named after a ludo-like game played here by the ladies of the court.

STAR SIGHTS

- ★ Turkish Sultana's House
- ★ Panch Mahal
- ★ Diwan-i-Khas

PLAN OF FATEHPUR SIKRI



Fatehpur Sikri's royal complex contains the private and public spaces of Akbar's court, which included the harem and the treasury. The adjoining sacred complex with the Jami Masjid, Salim Chishti's Tomb and the Buland Darwaza *(see p183)*, are separated from the royal quarters by the Badshahi Darwaza, an exclusive royal gateway.

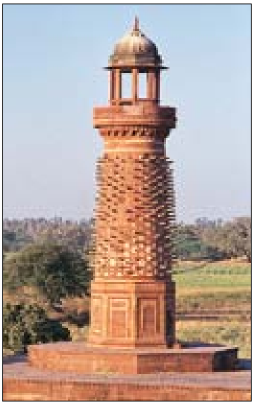
KEY

- 🟨 Area illustrated
- 🟩 Other buildings
- ▨ Sacred complex (Jami Masjid)

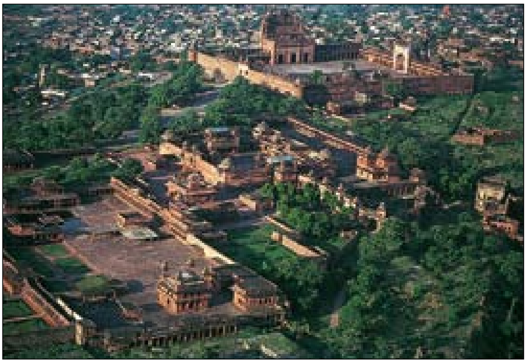
Exploring Fatehpur Sikri

Detail of a carved panel

The principal buildings of the imperial palace complex, clustered on a series of terraces along the sandstone ridge, formed the core of Akbar's city. Stylistically, they marked the absorption of Gujarat into the Mughal Empire and reveal a successful synthesis of pre-Islamic, Hindu and Jain architecture (as in the carved brackets) with the elegant domes and arches of Islamic buildings. The concentric terraces clearly separate the public spaces from the private royal quarters. The buildings are mostly in Akbar's favourite red sandstone, which was quarried from the ridge on which they stand.



Stone "tusks" on the Hiran Minar

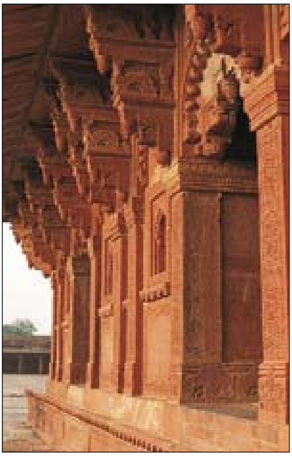


Aerial view of Fatehpur Sikri, Emperor Akbar's grand capital

Even today, access to the city that was Akbar's capital is provided by a straight road built by the emperor, once lined with exotic bazaars. It leads visitors through the Agra Gate to the triple-arched **Naubat Khana**, where the emperor's entry used to be announced by a roll of drums. Leading off from the Naubat Khana, is the western entrance to the imperial palace complex which opens into the spacious cloistered courtyard of the **Diwan-i-Aam**, where Akbar gave public audiences. A passage behind it leads into the "inner citadel". This contains the **Diwan-i-Khas**, **Khwabgah** and **Anoop Talao**, along with the treasuries and the **Abdar Khana** where water and fruit for the royal household were stored. It also contains the curiously named **Turkish Sultana's House**. Though probably built for one of Akbar's wives, the identity of the "Turkish Sultana" remains unclear. The great courtyard in front of the Diwan-i-Khas has the **Pachisi Court**, named after the central space that resembles the board of *pachisi*, a traditional game.

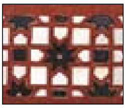
The **Haram Sara**, or harem complex, was a maze of interconnected buildings beyond Maryam's House or **Sunehra Makan** ("Golden House"), named after its rich frescoes and gilding. The massive and austere exterior of the harem leads to **Jodha Bai's Palace**, a large inner courtyard, surrounded by pavilions decorated with azure glazed tiles on the roof. A screened viaduct, presumably for privacy, connected the palace to the **Hawa Mahal** facing a small formal garden. The **Nagina Masjid**, adjoining the garden, was the royal ladies' private mosque. The two-storeyed pavilion popularly said to be **Birbal's House**, to the east of Jodha Bai's palace, has an unusual layout and fine carvings on its exterior and interior. Beyond this lie a large colonnaded enclosure surrounded by cells, probably meant for the servants of the harem, and the royal stables.

The **Hathi Pol** and **Sangin Burj**, the original gateways to the harem, lead to the outermost periphery of the palace complex. This was laid out in concentric circles around the inner citadel and is made up of ancillary structures, such as the caravanserais, the domed *hamams* (baths) and waterworks. The **Hiran Minar**, believed to be a memorial to Akbar's favourite elephant, was probably an *akash deep* ("heavenly light") with lamps suspended from stone "tusks" to guide visitors.

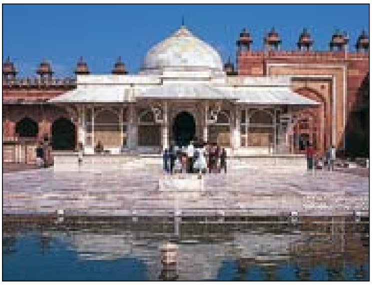


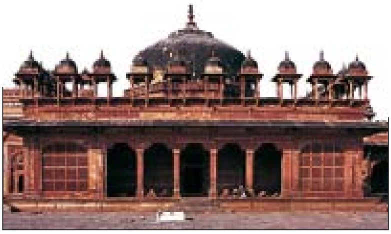
Entrance to Birbal's House

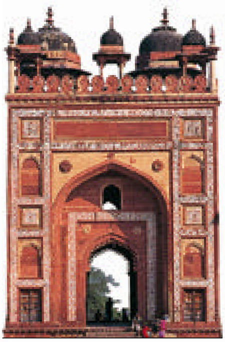
Jami Masjid

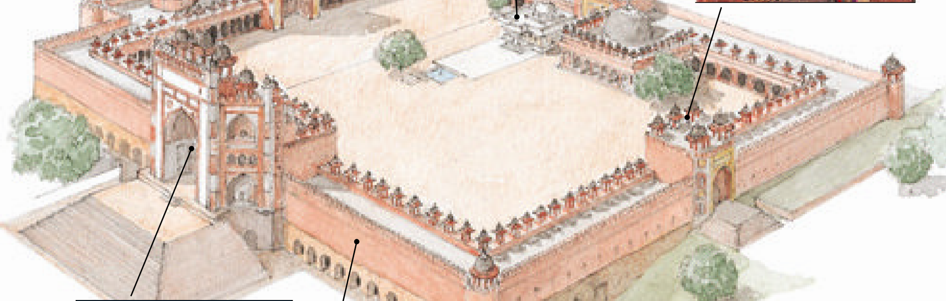

An inlaid panel

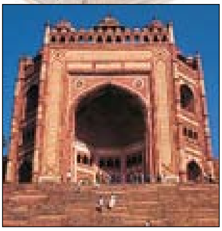
This grand open mosque towers over the city of Fatehpur Sikri and was the model for several Mughal mosques. Flanked by arched cloisters, its vast congregational area has monumental gateways to the east and south. The spiritual focus of the complex is the tomb and hermitage of the Sufi mystic, Salim Chishti, as popular today as it was during the time of Akbar.


Tomb of Sheikh Salim Chishti
Exquisite marble serpentine brackets and almost transparent screens surround the inner tomb which has a sandalwood canopy inlaid with mother-of-pearl.


Hujra
Symmetrically flanking the main mosque, this pair of identical cloistered prayer rooms have flat-roofed pillared galleries that run round the complex.

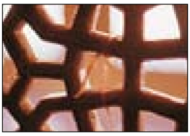

Badshahi Darwaza
Akbar used the steep steps of this royal gateway to enter the complex. The view of the sacred mosque directly across, greeted his entry.

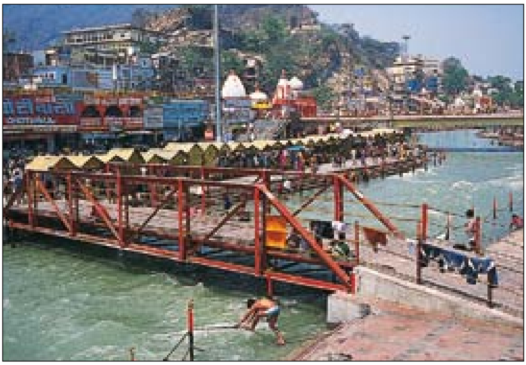



Buland Darwaza
Erected by Akbar to mark his conquest over Gujarat in 1573, this huge 54-m (177-ft) gateway later inspired other lofty gateways.

MAKING A WISH IN SALIM CHISHTI'S TOMB

Ever since Akbar's childlessness was ended by the remarkable prediction of Salim Chishti in 1568, the saint's tomb has attracted crowds of supplicants, particularly childless women in search of a miracle. Visitors to the *dargah*, lavishly endowed by both Akbar and his son Jahangir, make a wish, tie a small cotton thread on the screen around the tomb, and go back confident that the saint will make it come true.


A thread tied to a screen in Chishti's tomb



Pilgrims taking a dip in the holy Ganges at Haridwar

Haridwar ❻

Haridwar district. 214 km (133 miles) N of Delhi. 🚉 🚌 ℹ *GMVN Tourist Office, Rahi Motel (01334) 228 686.* 🎭 *Kumbh Mela (every 12 years; Feb–Mar), Ardh Kumbha Mela (every 6 years; Feb–Mar), Haridwar Festival (Oct), Dussehra (Sep/Oct).*

The Ganges, India's holiest river *(see pp162–3)*, descends from the Himalayas and begins its journey through the plains at Haridwar. This gives the town a unique status, making a pilgrimage to Haridwar every devout Hindu's dream.

Surprisingly bare of ancient monuments, Haridwar's most famous "sight", as well as a constant point of reference, is the Ganges itself with its numerous bathing ghats, tanks and temples. These bustling sites of ritual Hindu practices, performed by pilgrims for the salvation of their ancestors and for their own expiation, demonstrate their deep faith in the power of the river. The main ghat, **Har-ki-Pauri**, is named after a supposed imprint of Vishnu's feet at the site. Hundreds attend the daily evening *aarti* at this ghat, when leaf boats are filled with flowers, lit with lamps and set adrift on the Ganges. Further south, a ropeway connects the town to the **Mansa Devi Temple** on a hill across the river, which offers panoramic views of Haridwar. Also situated south of the town is the **Gurukul Kangri University**, a renowned centre of Vedic knowledge, where students are taught by their gurus in the traditional oral style. A section here displays archaeological finds.

Sign of Chotiwala, a popular restaurant

A good way to experience Haridwar's ambience, which has changed little since ancient times, is to stroll along the riverside bazaar, lined with small eateries and stalls full of ritual paraphernalia – small mounds of vermilion powder, coconuts wrapped in red and gold cloth, and brass idols. The most popular items with the pilgrims are the jars and canisters sold here. These are used to carry back a vital ingredient of Hindu rituals: water from the Ganges (Gangajal) which, the faithful believe, remains ever fresh.

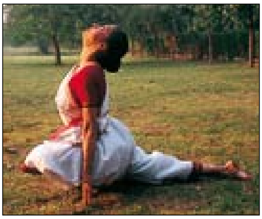
Rishikesh ❼

Haridwar district. 238 km (148 miles) N of Delhi. 🚌 ℹ *GMVN Tourist Office Muni-ki-Reti, (0135) 243 1793.* 🎭 *International Yoga Week (Feb).*

This twin city of Haridwar, situated at the confluence of the Chandrabhaga and the Ganges, marks the starting point of the holy Char Dham pilgrim route *(see p187)*. Muni-ki-Reti (literally "Sand of the Sages"), lies upstream from the Triveni Ghat, and is said to be a blessed site since ancient sages meditated at this spot. It has several famous ashrams, including the Sivanand, Purnanand and Shanti Kunj ashrams, which offer courses in India's ancient knowledge systems *(see p754)*. North of Muni-ki Reti are two suspension bridges across the Ganges, Rama or Sivananda Jhula and Lakshman Jhula.

YOGA: THE ANCIENT PATH TO HOLISTIC HEALTH

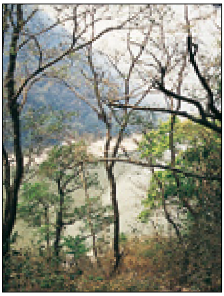
Over 2,000 years ago, the sage Patanjali formulated a series of physical postures called *asanas* which, along with controlled breathing and meditation *(pranayama)*, were meant to set the individual on the path to self-realization. Ever since, yoga has been practised by ascetics and non-ascetics alike. Essentially, yoga calms and focuses the mind by stimulating blood circulation while relaxing nerves and muscles. This helps to combat the stress of daily life and is particularly suited to modern lifestyles as it does not require equipment or visits to the gym. Yoga entered the wider popular consciousness in the late 1960s when the Beatles paid a visit to the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's ashram in Rishikesh, and today many schools of yoga have centres in India as well as in Europe and North America. Rishikesh, with its plethora of yoga ashrams, is touted as the yoga capital of the world. An International Yoga Week *(see p179)* is also held here in February.



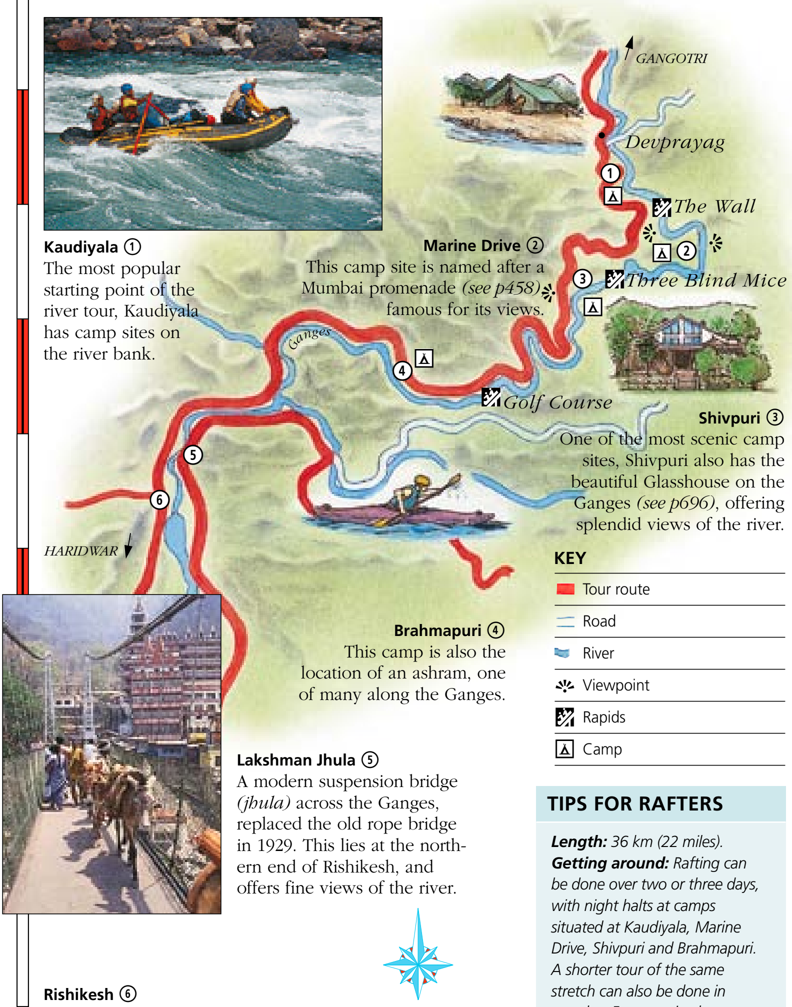
A woman performing an *asana*

River Tour along the Ganges ❽

From September to April, the Ganges, swollen by the monsoon rains of the upper catchment areas, becomes a torrent, gushing over rocky boulders as it hurtles out of the mountains to the plains. During this period a few stretches of rapids, where the flow is rough but safe, become a popular circuit for enthusiasts of white-water rafting. Only organized tours, run by certified experts, are allowed. For the less adventurous, a scenic driving tour meanders through this valley of the sages, whose ashrams nestle in the surrounding forests along the holy river.



The Ganges flowing serenely through a forested valley



Kaudiyala ①
The most popular starting point of the river tour, Kaudiyala has camp sites on the river bank.

Marine Drive ②
This camp site is named after a Mumbai promenade *(see p458)* famous for its views.

Shivpuri ③
One of the most scenic camp sites, Shivpuri also has the beautiful Glasshouse on the Ganges *(see p696)*, offering splendid views of the river.

Brahmapuri ④
This camp is also the location of an ashram, one of many along the Ganges.

Lakshman Jhula ⑤
A modern suspension bridge *(jhula)* across the Ganges, replaced the old rope bridge in 1929. This lies at the northern end of Rishikesh, and offers fine views of the river.

Rishikesh ⑥
An ancient spiritual centre, Rishikesh is serenely located on the banks of the Ganges amid lush, wooded hills.

KEY

🟥	Tour route
=	Road
~	River
✳	Viewpoint
▨	Rapids
⛺	Camp

TIPS FOR RAFTERS

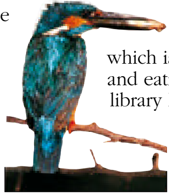
Length: *36 km (22 miles).*
Getting around: *Rafting can be done over two or three days, with night halts at camps situated at Kaudiyala, Marine Drive, Shivpuri and Brahmapuri. A shorter tour of the same stretch can also be done in one day. For organized tours, tour operators and equipment hire* (see p755).

The façade of the Forest Research Institute, Dehra Dun, established in 1914

Dehra Dun ❾

Dehra Dun district. 256 km (159 miles) NE of Delhi. 👥 *447,800.* ✈ *Jolly Grant, 24 km (15 miles) SE of town centre.* 🚉 🚌 ℹ *GMVN, 74/1, Rajpur Road, (0135) 274 7898.*

Fringed by the Shivalik Hills, Dehra Dun lies in the pretty Doon Valley, flanked by the Ganges to the west and the Yamuna to the east. The provisional capital of the newly-formed state of Uttaranchal, the town is also the gateway to the Garhwal Hills. A number of prestigious institutions have their headquarters here, such as the Survey of India and the Forest Research Institute. India's very own Eton, the Doon School, as well as the country's foremost training academy for army officers, the Indian Military Academy, are also situated here. Rajpur Road, the main link to the hills, is lined with bakeries and restaurants and has the old Clock Tower, the town's principal landmark, at one end. Dehra Dun's bracing climate and its proximity to Mussoorie, make it a popular retirement retreat. The Doon Valley is also famous for its fragrant basmati rice, and its mango and litchi orchards.


Little blue kingfisher

Environs

The **Rajaji National Park**, 5 km (3 miles) southeast of Dehra Dun, is a picturesque wildlife sanctuary covering over 800 sq km (309 sq miles). It is best known for its birdlife and herds of elephants.

Mussoorie ❿

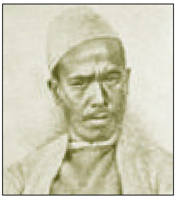
Uttarkashi district. 35 km (22 miles) N of Dehra Dun. 👥 *26,000.* 🚌 ℹ *Uttaranchal Tourist Bureau, The Mall, (0135) 263 2663.*

One of the Raj's most popular summer retreats, Mussoorie is perched on a horseshoe-shaped ridge above the Doon Valley at a height of 1,920 m (6,299 ft), and is inundated with Indian visitors in summer. Life in Mussoorie centres around The Mall, the main thoroughfare, which is lined with shops and eating places. The old library lies at the town's western end. About 7 km (4 miles) further west, is a house known as **Everest House**. This was the home of Sir George Everest, the legendary Surveyor-General who mapped Mount Everest, and one of Mussoorie's earliest residents. The town's small Tibetan community is settled in **Happy Valley**, close to Convent Hill. The **Tibetan Market**, below The Mall, sells a range of woollens. A rope-way from The Mall leads up to **Gun Hill**, which, on a clear day, has fine views of many Greater Himalayan peaks, including Nanda Devi, Kedarnath and Badrinath *(see pp64–5)*. **Camel's Back Road** named after a distinctively shaped rock, offers a pleasant walk along the upper ridge, and **Kempty Falls**, lying 12 km (8 miles) northwest of town, is a popular picnic spot.

Landour, a short distance east of Kulri bazaar, was originally a barracks and convalescence area for British soldiers. With its colonial bungalows and relative quiet, it has managed to preserve some of Mussoorie's old character and is the town's prettiest quarter.

THE PUNDITS

Up to the mid 19th-century, Tibet and Central Asia were vast blanks on the map of the world, yet strategically important to the British in their rivalry with Imperial Russia. As foreigners were forbidden from entering these lands, between 1865 and 1885, the Survey of India trained and sent an intrepid group of Indians to survey the region. Known as the Pundits, these men went disguised as Buddhist pilgrims and traders, with compasses and survey notes concealed in their prayer wheels, and mercury thermometers hidden in their hollowed-out pilgrims staffs. The beads of a rosary helped them measure the distance they covered every day. The most remarkable of the Pundits was Nain Singh, who brought back invaluable and accurate topographical information on large tracts of Tibet.


A portrait of Nain Singh (1830–95)

The Garhwal Hills ⑪

Uttarkashi and Chamoli districts. 148 km (92 miles) N from Rishikesh to Uttarkashi. 🚌 ℹ *Uttaranchal Tourist Bureau, Uttarkashi, (01374) 274 761.*

The northern stretches of Garhwal (Uttaranchal's western hills) are strewn with pilgrim towns, ancient shrines and forbidding snowbound peaks. **Uttarkashi**, the main town, lies 148 km (92 miles) north of Rishikesh *(see p184)*, and is an important starting point for treks to the upper reaches of Garhwal. A leading school for aspiring climbers, the **Nehru Institute of Mountaineering**, is situated in this town, and boasts of having trained Bachendri Pal, the first Indian woman to scale Mount Everest in 1984.

This region also encompasses an area traditionally known as Dev Bhoomi ("Abode of the Gods"). The Char Dham or four major places of pilgrimage, **Gangotri**, **Yamunotri**, **Kedarnath** and **Badrinath**, are all situated here at altitudes over 3,100 m (10,171 ft), in the shadow of some awe-inspiring Himalayan peaks. The pilgrimage season lasts from April to early November, after which the snows drive away all but the most devout. All four sites can be reached from Uttarkashi, Haridwar and Rishikesh.

Badrinath, Garhwal's foremost *dham* and source of the Alaknanda river

Yamunotri, 209 km (130 miles) north of Rishikesh, is the source of the Yamuna, and a 13-km (8-mile) walk from Hanuman Chatti. Its temple was rebuilt in the 20th century after the earlier one was destroyed by floods. The small village of Gangotri, named after the Ganges which flows through it, lies 100 km (62 miles) northeast of Uttarkashi. Its 18th-century temple has images of Hindu deities. **Gaumukh**, the source of River Ganges, lies 18 km (11 miles) upstream, below the soaring Bhagirathi peaks, and can be reached via a path that follows the lovely river valley. At this point, the river is known as the Bhagirathi, and only becomes the Ganges proper after it joins the Alaknanda river at **Devprayag** *(see p162)*.

A mendicant in saffron robes

Gaumukh, the glacial source of the Ganges, backed by the Bhagirathi peaks

The impressive Kedarnath peaks form the backdrop for the pilgrim town of Kedarnath, sacred to Shiva, and 223 km (139 miles) northeast of Rishikesh. A beautifully carved stone temple, said to be 800 years old, lies 4 km (9 miles) north of the road head at Gaurikund.

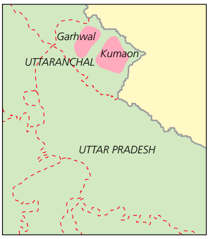
The most visited of all the Char Dham shrines, Badrinath is situated 298 km (185 miles) northeast of Rishikesh. Its colourfully painted temple, dedicated to Vishnu, is usually packed with pilgrims. The town has a spectacular setting, wedged between the Nar and Narayan ranges. The Neelkanth or "Blue Throat Peak", named after Lord Shiva, towers over Badrinath at a height of 6,957 m (22,825 ft).

Joshimath, lying 250 km (155 miles) northeast of Rishikesh at the confluence of the Dhauli Ganga and Alaknanda rivers at Vishnuprayag, is one of the four *mathas* (seats of learning) established by the great 9th-century sage, Adi Shankaracharya *(see p648)*. It is also the junction of two ancient trans-Himalayan trading routes. The town was a gateway to the Nanda Devi Sanctuary *(see p189)*, until the sanctuary was closed to the public in 1983. Today, visitors head mostly for the ski slopes of **Auli**, reached via road or cable car from Joshimath. The popular trek to the Sikh shrine of **Hemkund Sahib** and the **Valley of Flowers National Park** *(see p189)* begins 20 km (12 miles) north of Joshimath, from Ghangaria. The Valley of Flowers, best visited between the months of June and September, is a carpet of anemones, roses, primulas and other alpine flora.

Trekking in Garhwal and Kumaon

Wild irises, Garhwal

No Himalayan ranges are as rich in myth and legend as those of Garhwal and Kumaon (Uttaranchal's eastern hills). Known as Dev Bhoomi ("Abode of the Gods"), every peak, river and trail is either named after a Hindu god or goddess, or finds mention in holy scriptures. Relatively easy to access, Garhwal and Kumaon are a wonderful introduction to the Himalayas. A single walk can lead through forests, valleys bursting with wild flowers, and glacial moonscapes of rock and ice. The best seasons are between February and May and September and November.


Garhwal
Kumaon
UTTARANCHAL
UTTAR PRADESH

LOCATOR MAP

🟥 Areas shown below

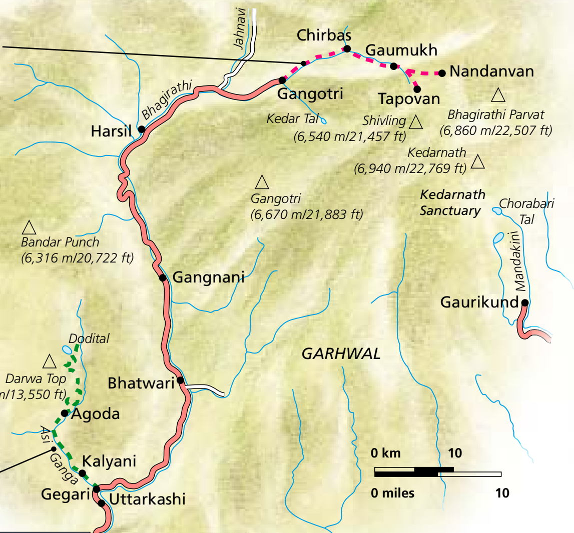
The Gaumukh Trail

This 26-km (16-mile) path traces the infant River Ganges along an ancient pilgrim trail, from Gangotri to its glacial source at Gaumukh (see p162). *The route crosses the Gangotri Glacier and forks, leading to the meadows of Tapovan and Nandanvan, dominated by the imposing Bhagirathi and Shivling peaks.*

Duration: *6 days*

Altitude: *4,500 m (14,764 ft)*

Level of Difficulty: *moderate to tough*


Jahnavi
Chirbas
Gaumukh
Nandanvan
Bhagirathi
Gangotri
Tapovan
Harsil
Kedar Tal
Shivling
(6,540 m/21,457 ft)
Bhagirathi Parvat
(6,860 m/22,507 ft)
Kedarnath
(6,940 m/22,769 ft)
Gangotri
(6,670 m/21,883 ft)
Kedarnath Sanctuary
Chorabari Tal
Mandakini
Bandar Punch
(6,316 m/20,722 ft)
Gangnani
Gaurikund
Dodital
GARHWAL
Darwa Top
(4,130 m/13,550 ft)
Bhatwari
Agoda
Asi Ganga
Kalyani
Gegari
Uttarkashi
0 km
10
0 miles
10

KEY

- The Gaumukh Trail
- Dodital
- The Curzon Trail
- Pindari Glacier
- The Valley of Flowers
- Major road
- Minor road
- △ Peak
- Pass

Dodital

One of Garhwal's popular treks, the 23-km (14-mile) path from Kalyani follows the Asi Ganga river valley, past Agoda to Dodital. This jewel-like lake, whose waters swarm with trout, is set in a densely wooded bowl. The pine and deodar forests are home to a variety of Himalayan birds.

Duration: *3 days*

Altitude: *3,024 m (9,921 ft)*

Level of Difficulty: *easy*

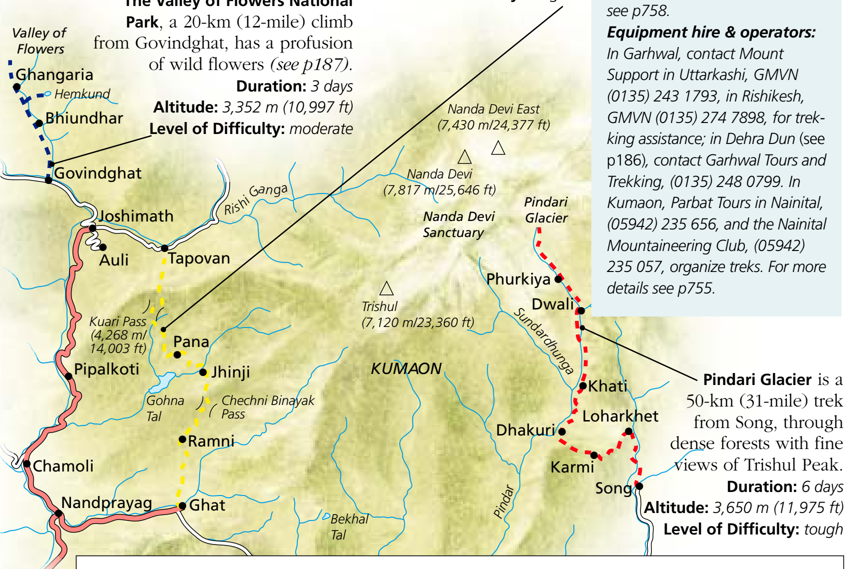
The Curzon Trail

The 70-km (44-mile) trail is named after the British viceroy who followed this route. From Ghat, it skirts the western edge of the Nanda Devi Sanctuary, crossing over the Kuari Pass, with clear views of Nanda Devi. It ends at Tapovan, 12 km (8 mile) northwest of Joshimath.

Duration: *6 days*
Altitude: *4,268 m (14,003 ft)*
Level of Difficulty: *tough*

TIPS FOR WALKERS

Be prepared: *Acclimatization is essential for altitudes over 3,000 m (9,843 ft). See p767 for information on altitude sickness. For longer routes, guides are necessary. For more details on trekking see p751.*
On the trek: *Drink plenty of water. Carry a first aid kit and cooking fuel. Never burn wood, which is a scarce resource. Put out all fires properly, leaving no burning embers. Do not litter, and carry your rubbish back with you.*
Permits: *In Garhwal, travel permits are required for border areas which can be obtained from the District Magistrate's Office in Uttarkashi, (01374) 222 280 or the GMVN, Rishikesh, (0135) 243 1793. No permits are required for Kumaon. For more information see p758.*
Equipment hire & operators: *In Garhwal, contact Mount Support in Uttarkashi, GMVN (0135) 243 1793, in Rishikesh, GMVN (0135) 274 7898, for trekking assistance; in Dehra Dun* (see p186), *contact Garhwal Tours and Trekking, (0135) 248 0799. In Kumaon, Parbat Tours in Nainital, (05942) 235 656, and the Nainital Mountaineering Club, (05942) 235 057, organize treks. For more details see p755.*


Valley of Flowers
Ghangaria
Hemkund
Bhiundhar
Govindghat
Joshimath
Auli
Tapovan
Rishi Ganga
Nanda Devi East (7,430 m/24,377 ft)
Nanda Devi (7,817 m/25,646 ft)
Nanda Devi Sanctuary
Pindari Glacier
Phurkiya
Dwali
Sundardhunga
Trishul (7,120 m/23,360 ft)
Kuari Pass (4,268 m/ 14,003 ft)
Pana
Pipalkoti
Jhinji
KUMAON
Khati
Gohna Tal
Chechni Binayak Pass
Loharkhet
Dhakuri
Ramni
Karmi
Chamoli
Song
Nandprayag
Ghat
Bekhal Tal
Pindar

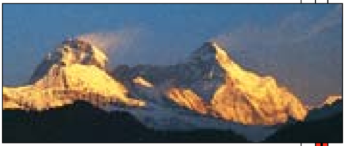
The Valley of Flowers National Park, a 20-km (12-mile) climb from Govindghat, has a profusion of wild flowers *(see p187)*.

Duration: *3 days*
Altitude: *3,352 m (10,997 ft)*
Level of Difficulty: *moderate*

Pindari Glacier is a 50-km (31-mile) trek from Song, through dense forests with fine views of Trishul Peak.

Duration: *6 days*
Altitude: *3,650 m (11,975 ft)*
Level of Difficulty: *tough*

NANDA DEVI SANCTUARY



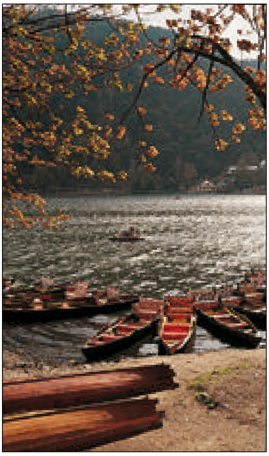
Nanda Devi and Nanda Devi East

The 630-sq km (243-sq mile) Nanda Devi Sanctuary has three splendid peaks – Nanda Devi, Nanda Devi East and Nanda Kot, which form a snowy wall in the north. Nanda Devi *(see pp64–5)* is India's second highest peak at 7,817 m (25,646 ft). Believed to be the birthplace of Shiva's consort, Parvati, the mountain is revered as a goddess. The area was thought to be impenetrable till British mountaineers Eric Shipton and Bill Tilman discovered a route in 1936. A spate of expeditions followed, to the distress of the local people who believed this would incur the wrath of the goddess. In 1976, American mountaineer Willi Unsoeld, along with his 22-year-old daughter Nanda Devi (whom he had named after the peak), set off for the mountain, but Nanda Devi died tragically during the expedition. The core area of the sanctuary was closed in 1983 to protect its fragile ecosystem, which is the habitat of rare fauna such as the snow leopard and the monal pheasant.

Nainital ⓬

Nainital district. 322 km (200 miles) NE of Delhi. 🚉 *Kathgodam, 35 km (22 miles) S of Nainital, then taxi or bus.* 🚌 ℹ *KMVN, Om Park, (05942) 231 436.*

This pretty hill station, nestled in the Kumaon Hills, is named after the emerald green eyes *(naina)* of Parvati, Shiva's consort. A temple dedicated to the goddess stands on the northern shore of the large freshwater lake *(tal)*. The old summer capital of the British Raj's United Provinces, Nainital is today part of the newly-formed state of Uttaranchal. The lake is encircled by the Mall Road, and the "flats", a large field which is a popular promenade and recreation centre. The **Boat House Club**, set up in 1890 on the water's edge, is the hub of many activities and has a number of sail boats and rubber dinghies for hire. The many attractive colonial buildings include the governor's summer residence (built in 1899), St Joseph's School, the old Secretariat (now the Uttaranchal High Court) and the Municipal Library. **St-John-in-the-Wilderness** is an evocatively named Gothic church, with fine stained-glass windows and dark wooden pews. Nainital also has some beautiful walking trails, one of which leads up from the flats, through the densely wooded Ayarpata Hill, to **Tiffin Top** and **Dorothy's Seat**, lookout points offering panoramic views of the lakeside. Close by, and almost hidden by the forest, is an old public school, the appropriately named **Sherwood College**. The Upper Cheena Mall leads to Naina Peak, with breathtaking views of the mountain ranges. Less energetic visitors can take the cable car up to **Snow View** for scenic views.


The lake at Nainital, with facilities for boating and water sports

The 11th-century complex of stone temples at Jageshwar, near Almora

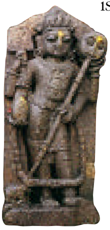
Environs

Described as India's Lake District, Nainital's environs have a number of serene lakes, surrounded by thick forests. Excursions are offered to **Bhim Tal**, 22 km (14 miles) east of Nainital; **Naukuchiya Tal**, just 4 km (2.5 miles) from Bhim Tal, is a lake with nine corners, rich in birdlife; and **Sat Tal**, a conglomeration of seven lakes, located 21 km (13 miles) northeast of Nainital. **Mukteshwar**, 30 km (19 miles) northeast of Nainital, is one of the most beautiful spots in the area, along with the orchards at **Ramgarh**, close by.

Almora ⓭

Almora district. 285 km (177 miles) NE of Delhi. 🚉 *Kathgodam, 90 km (56 miles) S of Almora, then taxi or bus.* 🚌 ℹ *KMVN, Holiday Home, (05962) 230 250.*

The large market town of Almora is the headquarters of the surrounding district. Its curving ridge offers expansive views of the spectacular Greater Himalayan Range, including peaks such as Trishul and the spectacular Nanda Devi *(see p189)*. The cobbled street of Almora's distinctive bazaar lies above The Mall, where locally crafted *tamta* products (hand-beaten copper and brass utensils plated with silver) are on sale. The town's trademark confectionery, the *bal mithai,* is available here as well. Also of interest are the tall, narrow houses with their delicately carved wooden façades, a hallmark of local architecture. The historic **Almora Jail**, probably one of the few in the country with such picturesque surroundings, once held important political prisoners such as Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. A number of temples dot the landscape; the most popular of these are the **Chitai Temple** and the **Udyotchandeshwar Temple**. On the western edge of town, **Brighton End Corner** has fine mountain views.


Sculpture, Jageshwar

Environs

Binsar, 34 km (21 miles) northeast of Almora, at an altitude of 2,412 m (7,913 ft), is a wonderful spot from which to view the mountains. The steep drive up through tangy forests of pine is very pretty, and there is a 13th-century Shiva Temple set in the forest, just short of the summit. **Jageshwar**, located 34 km (21 miles) east of Almora, is of great religious significance. This is an

Ranikhet's nine-hole golf course, offering fine mountain views

impressive complex of over 100 splendidly carved stone temples, dating back to the 11th century.

Ranikhet ⑭

Almora district. 367 km (228 miles) NE of Delhi. 🚌 ℹ Tourist Reception Centre, Mall Rd, (05966) 220 893.

Primarily a cantonment town, Ranikhet is home to the Indian Army's renowned Kumaon Regiment. Not surprisingly, the army is the town's most visible presence, its many red-roofed bungalows spreading across the wide "Queen's Field", a literal translation of the town's name. **Sadar Bazaar** is the main market, while the **Upper Mall** leads away from the bazaar to the quieter part of town. **Chaubatia**, once a British sanatorium, lies further along The Mall and now houses the Government Fruit Garden, which grows 200 varieties of fruit. Ranikhet's true allure, however, lies in its untrammelled Himalayan views that offer a spectacular vista of nearly 350 km (217 miles) of the Greater Himalayan Range. The **Army Golf Course**, 6 km (4 miles) down the Almora Road at Uphat, is one of the country's highest golf courses, and was originally a racetrack. It welcomes visitors who are willing to pay green fees, so take no notice of the signboard that threatens trespassers.

Lansdowne ⑮

Almora district. 216 km (134 miles) NE of Delhi. 🚉 Kotdwar, 37 km (23 miles) SW of town centre, then taxi or bus. 🚌

The cantonment town of Lansdowne, is one of the few hill stations that has managed to remain wonderfully unchanged over the last century. Away from the main tourist circuit, the town has been spared the frenzied building and modernization that has crept into other popular destinations. A loosely spread out jumble of bungalows and shops, it is set on gentle forested slopes of pine, deodar and silver oak. The Army's Garhwal Rifles have their regimental centre here, and a visit to the beautifully maintained regimental mess is a must. A pleasant walk leads to **Tip-n-Top**, a lookout point 3 km (2 miles) from town, which offers excellent mountain views.

A green bee-eater with its catch

Kausani ⑯

Almora district. 385 km (239 miles) NE of Delhi. 🚌 ℹ Tourist Reception Centre, (05962) 258 006.

Kausani was Mahatma Gandhi's favourite abode in the hills. After a long stay here at the **Anashakti Yoga Ashram** in 1929, he remarked on how unnecessary it was for Indians to visit the European Alps for their health, when they had the beauty of Kausani at their doorsteps. A 400-km (249-mile) uninterrupted panorama of the Nanda Devi Range can be seen from the old **Circuit House**.

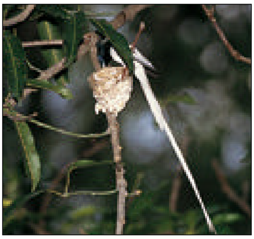
Environs

Baijnath, 20 km (12 miles) north of Kausani, is known for a cluster of temples, now in ruins, built in the 11th century. The main attraction is the **Parvati Temple**, with a 2-m (7-ft) high image of the goddess, dating from the 12th century. **Bageshwar**, 41 km (26 miles) east of Kausani, lies at the confluence of the Gomti and Saryu rivers, and was once a major trading post between Tibet and Kumaon. Although the link with Tibet no longer exists, local merchants still bring wool and animal hide to the town's annual Uttaryani Fair. With its stone temples dedicated to Shiva, Bageshwar is also an important pilgrimage centre in Kumaon. Nila Parvat (the "Blue Mountain"), stands proudly between the two rivers, and locals believe that it is home to all the 330 million deities of the Hindu pantheon. Many visitors to Bageshwar are en route to the Pindari Glacier *(see p189).*

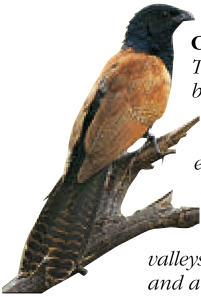
Pumpkins drying on a slate roof below the peaks at Kausani

Corbett National Park ⑰

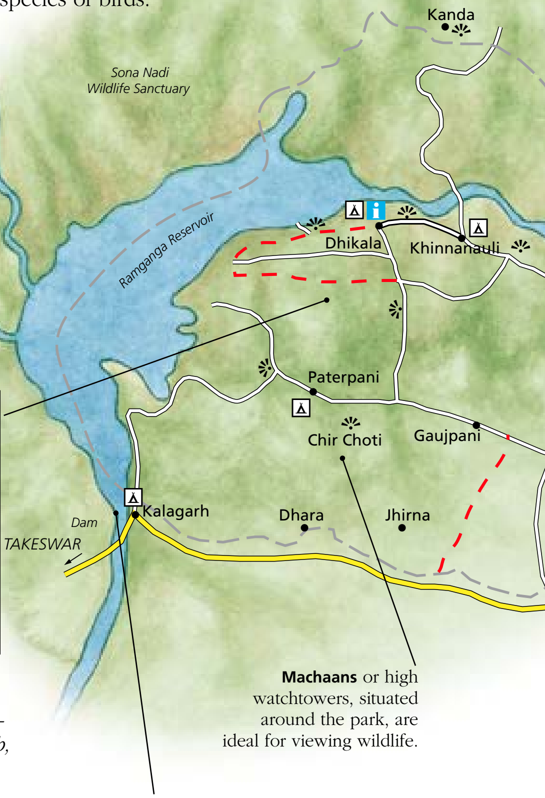
Situated along the valley of the Ramganga river and fringed by the Himalayan foothills in the north, Corbett is considered one of India's finest wildlife sanctuaries. The 1,318-sq km (509-sq mile) reserve was originally a hunter's paradise during the British Raj. In 1936, it became India's first national park, largely due to the efforts of the great British hunter-turned-conservationist Jim Corbett, after whom the park is named. The park encompasses varied terrain, from savannah grasslands to hilly ridges of deciduous forests with *chir* pine and *sal (Shorea robusta)*. Corbett is renowned for its remarkable variety of wildlife, notably tigers, elephants, *chausingha* (four-horned antelopes) and an astonishing 600 species of birds.



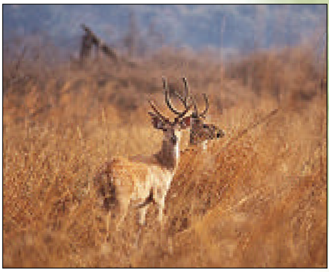
Paradise Flycatcher
The male has beautiful plumage, and measures 50 cm (20 in) in length.



Coucal or Crow Pheasant
This striking, black and brown bird is found all over northern India. Its loud and resonant call echoes over the valleys and forests in and around Corbett.



Machaans or high watchtowers, situated around the park, are ideal for viewing wildlife.



Grasslands
Vast savannah grasslands (chaurs), *ideal for viewing deer and other wildlife, surround Dhikala, the park's hub, located by the Ramganga Reservoir.*

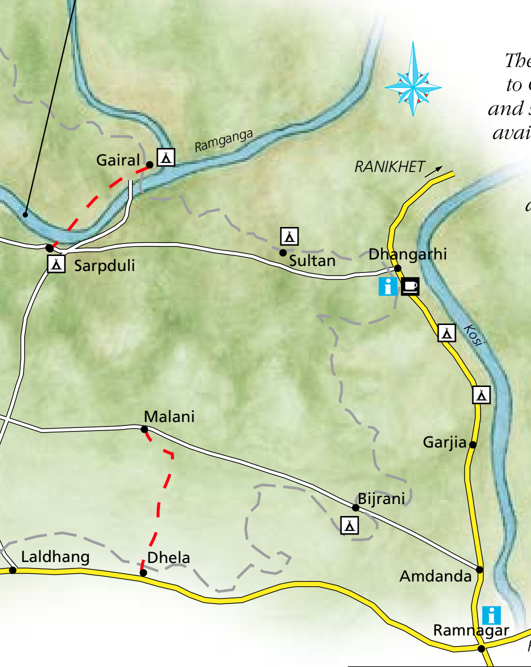
Gharial
The gharial (Gavialis gangeticus) *is a species that can be seen on the banks of the Ramganga Reservoir (formed by a dam on the Ramganga river). The reservoir also attracts a variety of water birds such as geese, ducks, grebes and storks.*

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp695–7 and pp724–6

Ramganga River
The lifeline of the park's wildlife, the Ramganga river is surrounded by tall elephant grass (nall) *and scrub.*

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Pauri Garhwal & Nainital districts. 436 km (271 miles) NW of Lucknow. **Entry points:** *Dhangarhi & Kalagarh.* 🚉 *Ramnagar, 20 km (12 miles) S of Dhangarhi.* 🚌 ℹ *For bookings and permits contact Ramnagar, (05947) 251 225.* ○ *Nov–Jun.* ✋ ✋ 📷 *extra charges for video.* 🐘



Elephant Safari
The highlights of a trip to Corbett are the sunrise and sunset elephant safaris, available from Dhikala and Bijrani. Apart from the herds of wild elephants and deer, it is sometimes possible to encounter a lone tiger or leopard.

Indian Tiger
Corbett has about 140 tigers. It became India's first Tiger Reserve in 1973, under the aegis of Project Tiger *(see p289).*

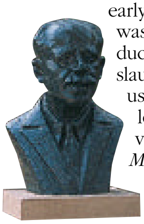
0 km 5
0 miles 5

KEY

- - Park boundary
- - Trail
- ═ Major road
- ═ Minor road
- ℹ Tourist information
- ✲ Viewpoint
- ☕ Café
- ⛺ Accommodation

JIM CORBETT (1875–1955)

Jim Corbett was born in Nainital and developed a keen interest in the jungles of Kumaon. An avid hunter in his early years (he shot his first leopard when he was eight), the turning point came when, on a duck shoot, he was appalled by the mindless slaughter of 300 birds. Corbett then decided to use his rifle solely to kill the man-eating leopards and tigers that plagued the nearby villages. Riveting accounts in his first book, *Man-eaters of Kumaon*, describe how he tracked and shot the dreaded Champawat tigress who had killed 434 people. In 1956, after Corbett's death, the park was named after him as a tribute to his pioneering efforts at conservation.



Bust of Corbett, Dhikala

Dudhwa National Park ⑱

Lakhimpur-Kheri district. 220 km (137 miles) N of Lucknow. **Entry point:** *Palia.* 🚉 🚌 ℹ *For bookings contact Field Director, Dudhwa, (05872) 252 106.* ○ *15 Nov–15 June.* 💰 📷 *extra charges. Jeeps available.* 🐘

Located close to the border with Nepal, Dudhwa National Park covers 490 sq km (189 sq miles) of densely wooded plains. Its forests have some of the finest specimens of *sal* trees in India. In 1988, Dudhwa was recognized as a Tiger Reserve, mainly due to the efforts of Billy Arjan Singh, a legendary environmentalist. Arjan Singh is best-known for the tigress, Tara, he hand-reared and returned to the wild in 1978.

Today, the park has more than 30 tigers. The park is also well known for its herds of swamp deer *(Cervus duvauceli)*. Better known as *barasingha* (literally, 12-antlered), these deer find their ideal habitat in the grassy wetlands in the southern reaches of the park.

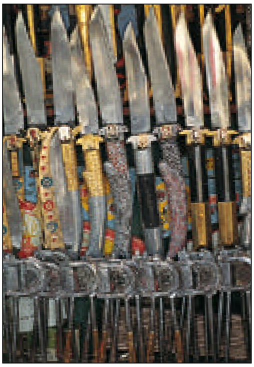
Other species include leopards, sloth bears and a small herd of rhinos, brought here from Assam and Nepal, in an attempt to re-introduce the species into Dudhwa. The park is also home to nearly 400 species of birds, among them swamp partidges, lesser floricans and hornbills. The park's lakes attract waterfowl such as fishing eagles and ibis.

Swamp deer, also known as *barasingha*, in Dudhwa's grasslands

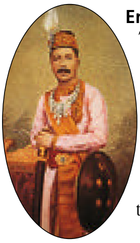
Rampur ⑲

Rampur district. 310 km (193 miles) NW of Lucknow. 👥 *281,500.* 🚉 🚌

Earlier a stronghold of the Afghan Rohilla chieftains (highlanders from Peshawar), Rampur became a princely state under the British. It was ruled by a dynasty of Muslim nawabs who were great connoisseurs of the arts. They drew hundreds of scholars and artists to their court, whose books and paintings became part of the state collection. They also established a famous *gharana* (school) of classical music. The Hamid Manzil, built by Nawab Hamid Ali Khan Bahadur who came to the throne in 1896, now houses the renowned **Raza Library**, which has a collection of almost 1,000 Mughal miniatures, over 10,000 books, numerous rare manuscripts, and portraits dating from the 16th to 18th centuries. It is not officially open to the public, but permission to visit can be obtained from the curator. Hamid Ali Khan was also responsible for renovating many of Rampur's palaces, including the sprawling palace and fort complex to the northwest of the town. Rampur is a maze of bazaars and was once known for its fine cotton *khes* (damask). Traces of its Rohilla warrior ancestry are visible in the famous daggers, always on sale, and in the touches of Pashto (the native tongue of Peshawar) which pepper the Urdu that is spoken here.



Rampur knives and daggers, a local speciality



Nawab Hamid Ali of Rampur

Raza Library
For permission to visit contact the curator. ***Tel*** *(0592) 232 5045, 232 5346.*

Environs

The town of **Moradabad**, lying 26 km (16 miles) west of Rampur, is a small 17th-century settlement, best known for its brass and metalware industries. The town's fort and mosque are almost hidden by the many tenements and bazaars.

Aligarh ⑳

Aligarh district. 371 km (231 miles) NW of Lucknow. 👥 *667,700.* 🚉 🚌 🎪 *Numaish (Feb).*

Historically important because of its location in an agriculturally rich region, Aligarh was a Rajput stronghold from the end of the 12th century onwards, until it was wrested by the Mughals. Its fort, which dates to 1524, fell to the British under Lord Lake in 1803. British presence influenced many of its foremost citizens, such as Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan who founded the **Aligarh Muslim University** in 1875, for which the town is most famous today. The sprawling campus has many

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp695–7 and pp724–6

imposing buildings, such as a mosque that is an exact replica of the Jami Masjid *(see p86)* in Delhi, only one-third its size.

Jhansi ㉑

Jhansi district. 301 km (187 miles) SW of Lucknow. 👥 *383,200.* 🚉 🚌 ℹ *UP Tourism, Shivpuri Rd, (0517) 244 1267.* 🎪 *Jhansi Festival (Feb).*

Most famous for the role that its queen, Rani Lakshmibai, played during the Indian Mutiny of 1857, Jhansi is a key transit point for visitors travelling from Delhi to the temples of Khajuraho *(see pp236–8)*. The main site of interest is **Shankar Fort**, built in 1613 by Raja Bir Singh Deo. It has 9-m (30-ft) high walls built in concentric rings around its centre, and offers fine views from its ramparts.

The **Archaeological Museum**, located outside the fort on the road back to town, has medieval Hindu sculpture, royal artifacts, and some prehistoric tools.

🏛 Archaeological Museum
○ *Tue–Sun.* ● *2nd Sat.* 🚫 📷 *extra charges for video photography.*

The ramparts of Shankar Fort at Jhansi, stormed by British forces in 1858

Kanpur ㉒

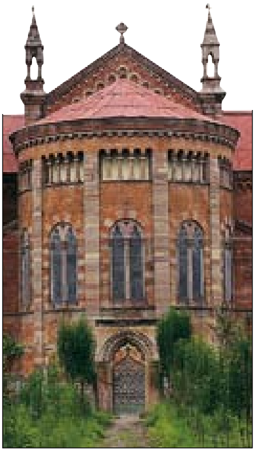
Kanpur district. 79 km (49 miles) SW of Lucknow. 👥 *2,532,100.* 🚉 🚌

One of British India's largest garrisons Kanpur, or Cawnpore as it was then known, witnessed some of the bloodiest battles in 1857. More than 1,000 British soldiers and civilians were killed when Nana Sahib, the Maratha ruler, broke the British siege held by General Sir Hugh Wheeler in June 1857. When British reinforcements arrived, equally ferocious reprisals occurred.

Today, Kanpur is an industrial city with leather, cotton and oil as its main products. The old garrison, now an enclave of the armed forces, has some interesting relics of the Raj. Among them is the **All Souls' Memorial Church**, a grand Gothic style structure with an intricate stained-glass window over the west door. Built after 1857, it is a memorial to those killed during the siege. East of the church, the pretty **Memorial Garden** has a statue of an angel surrounded by a Gothic screen. This statue originally stood at the site of a terrible massacre, where British women and children were hacked and thrown down a well near Bibighar, in the town's centre. Northeast of the church, **Sati Chaura Ghat** along the Ganges, is the spot where Indian forces killed 500 British soldiers and civilians. The **Military Cemetery** on the edge of the cantonment has many interesting graves, while in the town, the **King Edward VII Memorial Hall** and **Christ Church** (built in 1840) are also worth visiting.

Environs

Bithur, 25 km (16 miles) west of Kanpur, boasts a fort built by the Peshwas *(see p471)*. It is also the legendary birthplace of Lav and Kush, the twin sons of Rama and Sita *(see p27)*. About 60 km (37 miles) south of Kanpur, lies the beautiful 5th-century brick temple at **Bhitargaon**, built by the Gupta kings. The only one of its kind still surviving, most of the relief panels on the temple have vanished, but some terracotta sculptures inside remain.



Stained-glass window in the All Souls' Memorial Church, Kanpur

RANI LAKSHMIBAI OF JHANSI

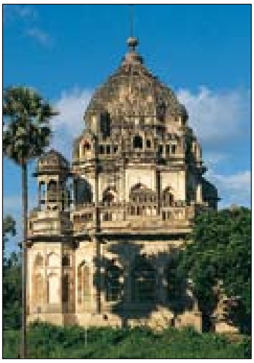
India's Joan of Arc, Rani Lakshmibai single-handedly defied the British when her husband, Raja Gangadhar Rao, died in 1853 leaving no adult heir. She wished to rule as Regent but the British invoked the infamous Doctrine of Lapse *(see p53)* and she was driven from her kingdom. While the Indian Mutiny of 1857 brewed in the north, the queen and her general, Tantia Tope, captured Gwalior Fort. She died defending it at Kotah-Sarai near Gwalior in 1858. According to the historian Christopher Hibbert, "she died dressed as a man, holding her sword two-handed and the reins of her horse in her teeth". She remains one of India's best-loved heroines.

Rani Lakshmibai astride her horse

Lucknow ㉓

The fish emblem of the nawabs

As the Mughal Empire disintegrated, many independent kingdoms, such as Avadh, were established. Its capital, Lucknow, rose to prominence when Asaf-ud-Daula, the fourth nawab, shifted his court here from Faizabad *(see p199)* in 1775. The city was also a great cultural centre, and its nawabs, best remembered for their refined and extravagant lifestyles, were patrons of the arts. Under them music and dance flourished, and many buildings were erected. In 1856 the British annexed Lucknow and deposed its last nawab, Wajid Ali Shah. This incident helped instigate the Indian Mutiny of 1857, when the city witnessed one of the bloodiest episodes in colonial history.



View of the Tomb of Khurshid Zadi, Qaiser Bagh

Qaiser Bagh Palace

Qaiser Bagh. ○ *daily.*

Once the most magnificent palace in Lucknow, Qaiser Bagh, was built by Wajid Ali Shah (r.1847–56), the last nawab. When the British recaptured Lucknow in 1858, they demolished many of the complex's more fanciful structures, with their florid sculptures of mermaids and cherubs. However, the remaining buildings, although in ruins, hint at their former splendour. The **Lal Baradari** now houses a fine arts academy as well as the archaeological section of the State Museum; the **Pathar Wali Baradari** is a school for Hindustani music; and the **Safaid Baradari**, now an office building, was where the nawab, dressed as a fakir, used to hold court. Only two wings of the residential quarters that once housed the nawab's vast harem remain. Carvings of fish, the nawabs' royal emblem, adorn many of the structures. Nearby, lie two grand tombs, the **Tomb of Saadat Ali Khan** (the fifth nawab) and the **Tomb of Khurshid Zadi**, his wife.

Under Nawab Wajid Ali Shah, Lucknow witnessed an artistic flowering. An aesthete who was not interested in governance, he devoted himself to poetry and music and is believed to have introduced the *thumri* (a form of light classical music). Dance forms benefited as well, and the Lucknow *gharana* (school) of Kathak *(see p28)* reached new heights during his short reign, before he was deposed by the British in 1856 and exiled to Calcutta.

Sikander Bagh

Sikander Bagh. ○ *daily.*

Sikander Bagh's stately gateway, adorned with the fish emblem

Named after Wajid Ali Shah's favourite queen, Sikander Bagh was the royal pleasure garden of the nawabs. In 1857, British troops led by Sir Colin Campbell relieved the siege of the Residency at this site. The **National Botanical Gardens and Research Centre** are now located in its grounds. To the west, the **Shah Najaf Imambara** has the tomb of Ghazi-ud-din Haidar (the sixth nawab).

Chattar Manzil

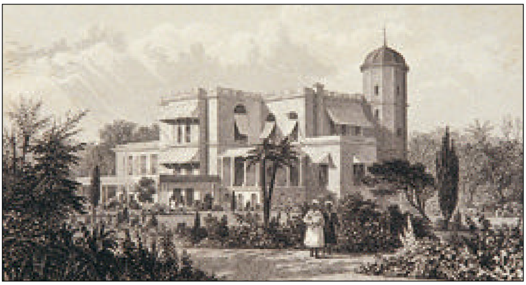
NW of Qaiser Bagh. ○ *daily.*

Built during Saadat Ali Khan's reign (1798–1814), the Chattar Manzil ("Umbrella Palace"), derives its name from the umbrella-shaped gilt dome *(chattar)* crowning the structure. A basement *(tehkhana)* was built below the level of the Gomti river, so that its waters could keep the area cool in the summer. The building now houses the Central Drug Research Institute.

The Residency

NW of Qaiser Bagh. ○ *daily.*

Lucknow's most haunting monuments are the desolate ruins of the Residency. This complex of buildings which grew around the large brick home of the Resident, was an exclusive British enclave, protected by fortifications. In 1857, all the city's British



The British Residency before it was destroyed during the siege of 1857 citizens took refuge here during the five-month siege. Sir Henry Lawrence, the commander of the troops, expected relief to arrive within 15 days. But, it was 87 days before a force led by Sir Henry Havelock broke through the ranks of sepoys, only to find themselves trapped inside. For the next seven weeks they faced constant bombardment, until Sir Colin Campbell finally retook the Residency on 17 November. By then, almost 2,000 people had died either from bullet wounds or from cholera and typhoid.

Today, the Residency looks just as it did in 1857. In its small museum, the gaping holes made by cannon fire. are still visible. The **Model Room** on the ground floor, has a model depicting British defences during the siege. Lying below, are the cellars where the women and children took shelter. The cemetery near the ruined church, has the forlorn graves of those who died, including that of Sir Henry Lawrence. An **Indian Martyrs' Memorial** stands opposite, on the banks of the Gomti river.

Bara Imambara

Hussainabad. ○ *daily.* ● *during Muharram (Mar/Apr).*

Lucknow's most distinctive architectural structures are the *imambaras*, or ceremonial halls used during Muharram *(see p669)*. The Bara ("Great") Imambara, built by Asaf-ud-Daula in 1784, was essentially a famine relief project providing much-needed employment. It is said that while one group of workers were involved with its construction during the day, another group dismantled it at night. Elaborate gates lead to this sprawling, low edifice. Its most remarkable feature is a large hall, 50-m (164-ft) long and 15-m (49-ft) high, totally unsupported by pillars.

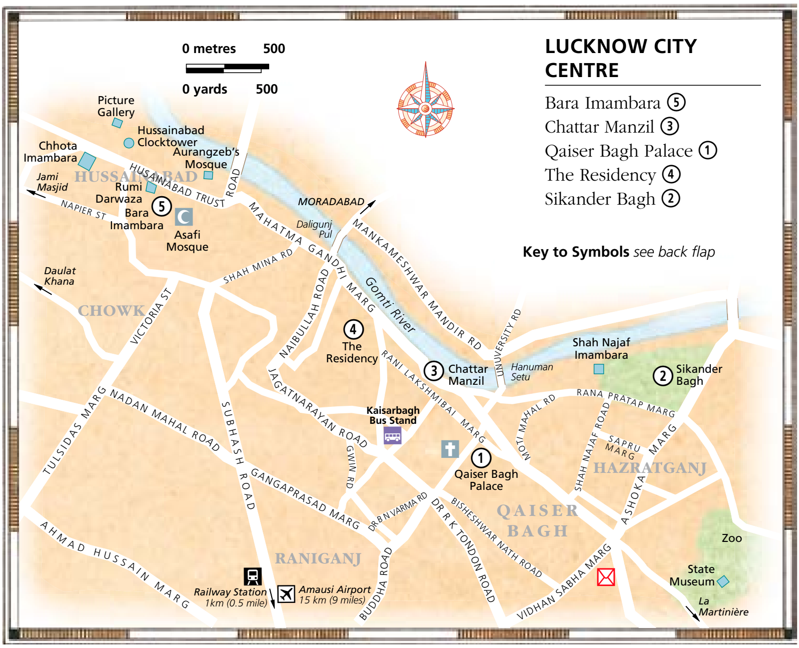
Above it is the *bhulbhulaiya*, a labyrinth of balconies and passages. The **Asafi Mosque** and a stepwell also lie in the compound.

Asaf-ud-Daula also erected the 18-m (59-ft) high **Rumi Darwaza**, just outside. This portal, embellished with lavish decorations, was the Imambara's west facing entrance.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Lucknow district. 516 km (321 miles) E of Delhi. 👥 *1,917,000.* ✈ *Amausi, 15 km (9 miles) SW of Lucknow* 🚉 🚌 ℹ *Regional Tourist Office, 10 Station Road, (0522) 263 8105.* 🎉 *Muharram (Mar/Apr).*

The Bara Imambara complex, built in the late 18th century


LUCKNOW CITY CENTRE
Bara Imambara ⑤
Chattar Manzil ③
Qaiser Bagh Palace ①
The Residency ④
Sikander Bagh ②
Key to Symbols see back flap
0 metres 500
0 yards 500
Picture Gallery
Hussainabad Clocktower
Chhota Imambara
Aurangzeb's Mosque
Jami Masjid
HUSSAINABAD
HUSAINABAD TRUST ROAD
Rumi Darwaza
NAPIER ST
⑤ Bara Imambara
Asafi Mosque
MORADABAD
Daligunj Pul
MAHATMA GANDHI MARG
MANKAMESHWAR MANDIR RD
SHAH MINA RD
Daulat Khana
CHOWK
VICTORIA ST
NAIBULLAH ROAD
Gomti River
④ The Residency
UNIVERSITY RD
③ Chattar Manzil
Hanuman Setu
Shah Najaf Imambara
② Sikander Bagh
RANI LAKSHMIBAI MARG
TULSIDAS MARG
NADAN MAHAL ROAD
JAGATNARAYAN ROAD
Kaisarbagh Bus Stand
MOTI MAHAL RD
RANA PRATAP MARG
SHAH NAJAF ROAD
SAPRU MARG
MARG
SUBHASH ROAD
GWIN RD
① Qaiser Bagh Palace
HAZRATGANJ
GANGAPRASAD MARG
DR B N VARMA RD
BISHESHWAR NATH ROAD
QAISER BAGH
ASHOKA MARG
Zoo
AHMAD HUSSAIN MARG
RANIGANJ
DR R K TONDON ROAD
VIDHAN SABHA MARG
State Museum
Railway Station 1km (0.5 mile)
Amausi Airport 15 km (9 miles)
BUDDHA ROAD
La Martinière

Lucknow: The Outer Sites

Some of Lucknow's best architectural sites lie beyond the city centre. The religious monuments, such as the *imambaras* and mosques, reveal a distinct Persian influence, while the secular buildings, which include the palaces of the nawabs as well as colonial structures, are more European in style. A particularly extravagant example among the latter is La Martinière. The home and mausoleum of a French adventurer, it later became a school, serving as the model for St Xavier's School which was immortalized in Rudyard Kipling's novel, *Kim*.

Close to the Rumi Darwaza *(see p197)*, **Aurangzeb's Mosque** stands on high ground known as Lakshman Tila, the location of Lucknow's original township. To the east is the **Hussainabad Clocktower**, erected in 1887. The 67-m (220-ft) high Gothic tower was built to mark the arrival of Sir George Cooper, Avadh's first lieutenant governor. To its west lies the 19th-century Baradari, built by Muhammed Ali Shah (the eighth nawab), where the **Picture Gallery** is located. Splendid life-sized portraits of the ten nawabs, painted between 1882 and 1885 and recently renovated, are on display here.

To the west of the Picture Gallery is the Hussainabad Imambara, better known as the **Chhota Imambara**. This gem-like structure is surmounted by a delicate gold dome, and its outside walls are engraved with superb calligraphy. The interiors are adorned with gilt-edged mirrors, ornate chandeliers, silver pulpits and colourful stucco decorations. The *tazias* (replica tombs) and *alams* (standards) used during the Muharram festival between March and April, are kept here. The **Jami Masjid**, to the southwest is another striking structure, built by Muhammed Ali Shah in the early 19th century. Its walls are heavily ornamented and its arches are covered with fine stucco work.

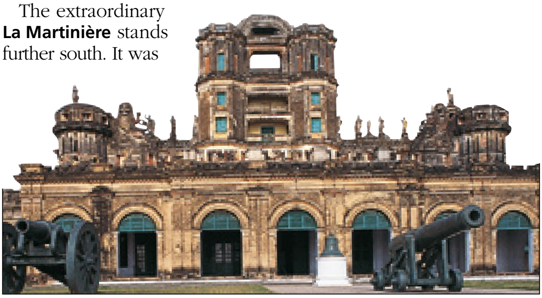
Northwest of the Jami Masjid, the **Daulat Khana** was the palace of Asaf-ud-Daula. Constructed in the late 1780s, it includes numerous Indo-European buildings. The most prominent of these is the **Asafi Kothi**, its elegant façade marked by semi-circular bays.

Lucknow's main market is situated in the **Chowk**, the city's atmospheric old quarter. Stretching from Gol Darwaza to Akbari Darwaza, this maze of narrow *galis* (lanes) is lined with shops selling a range of goods from colourful kites to *paan* to Lucknow's famed *chikankari* – fine muslin delicately embroidered with threadwork. Wholesale flower markets overflow with roses and jasmine, and *attar* shops sell tiny bottles of fragrant perfume. The Chowk is also the best place to sample some authentic local cuisine (especially the many varieties of succulent kebabs), refined to an art form by chefs attached to nawabi households *(see p165)*.

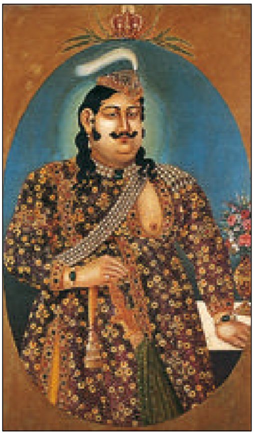
***Alam*, Chhota Imambara**

At the southeastern corner of the city, situated in the Zoological Gardens, is Lucknow's **State Museum**. Its collection includes rare silver and gold coins, 16th-century paintings, and stone sculpture from the 2nd century BC.

The extraordinary **La Martinière** stands further south. It was built by Major General Claude Martin, a French soldier of fortune and, in 1793, the richest European in Lucknow. A fanciful Gothic château, it has four enormous octagonal towers. The exterior is decorated with animals and mythological figures, including lions, gargoyles and a female sphinx. One of the two cannons on the terrace was cast by Martin, as was the bronze bell. He died in 1800 and is buried in the basement. In 1840, the building, in accordance with Martin's will, became a school for boys. The school was evacuated during the siege of Lucknow, but re-opened a year later.



The elaborate façade of La Martinière College for boys



Portrait of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah in the Picture Gallery

🏛 **Picture Gallery**
○ *Mon–Sat.*

🏛 **State Museum**
***Tel** (0522) 220 6158.* ○ *Tue–Sun.* ♿

🏛 **La Martinière College**
Prior permission required from the principal.
***Tel** (0522) 222 3863.*

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp695–7 and pp724–6

The colourful Hanuman Garhi Temple in Ayodhya

Ayodhya ㉔

Faizabad district. 134 km (83 miles) E of Lucknow. 🚌 🎪 *Kartik Purnima (Oct/Nov).*

Located on the banks of the Sarayu river, Ayodhya is said to be the birthplace of Rama, the divine hero of the *Ramayana (see p27)*. Dozens of temples in this small pilgrim town commemorate his birth. Whether this is a historical fact or simply part of oral tradition, for devout Hindus Ayodhya remains inextricably linked with the legend of Rama. As a result, when the Mughal emperor Babur built a mosque near the supposed spot of Rama's birthplace in 1526, he left behind a bitterly contested site. Known as the **Babri Masjid** ("Mosque of Babur"), it was a long-simmering source of tension between Hindus and Muslims. In 1992, a mob of Hindus tore down the mosque, leading to rioting all over the country. Security personnel now guard the site. A makeshift temple outside the security ring still attracts pilgrims, particularly during the full moon night of Kartik Purnima. One of the more renowned temples, among the hundreds of shrines on the river bank, is the **Hanuman Garhi**. Built within the walls of an old fort, it is dedicated to the monkey god, Hanuman.

Environs

Ayodhya's twin city, lying 6 km (4 miles) to its west, **Faizabad** has a sizeable Muslim population and was Avadh's first capital before it was shifted to Lucknow in 1775. In the town's centre is the Jami Masjid, built by the later Mughals, while the 18th-century tomb of Bahu Begum, the wife of Shuja-ud-Daula (Avadh's third nawab), is an austere structure built in marble. Faizabad also has a pretty rose garden.

THE MANGO: KING OF FRUITS

Langra mangoes, available in summer

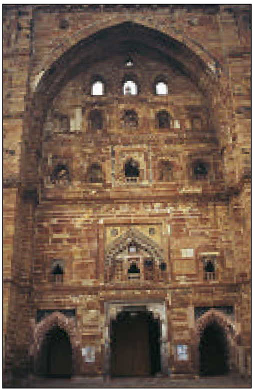
The mango *(aam)* is considered the king of tropical fruits and is the best-loved fruit of the country. The Mughal emperor Babur called it the "finest fruit of Hindostan". The popular paisley motif is derived from the shape of the mango fruit, and mango leaves, considered auspicious, are used as buntings at festive occasions. Of the hundreds of varieties grown all over the subcontinent, few are as aromatic and juicy as the mangoes of Jaunpur. The *langra* is arguably the best among the varieties grown here. It is fleshy, juicy and sweet, and possessed of a distinct tangy flavour. It sells at a premium countrywide and is widely exported to the Middle East and Europe. The *dussehri* from Lucknow, and the *chausa* from the Rampur region, are also popular varieties. The raw *chausa* is considered ideal for spicy chutneys and pickles, without which no meal is complete.

Jaunpur ㉕

Jaunpur district. 60 km (37 miles) SE of Lucknow. 👥 *160,000.* 🚆 🚌

Though largely bypassed by visitors, Jaunpur has a wealth of medieval Islamic architecture. Located along the Gomti river, Jaunpur was established by Feroze Shah Tughluq *(see p91)* in the late 14th century and soon grew into an important trading post. It was subsequently ruled by the independent Muslim rulers of the Sharqi dynasty who held sway for much of the 15th century, until Ibrahim Lodi conquered the city in 1479. It eventually fell to the Mughals in the early part of the 16th century.

Jaunpur's many rulers each left a distinct architectural stamp on the city. The Mughal emperor Akbar built the great **Akbari Bridge** across the river, which still stands. To its north is the **Old Shahi Fort** from the Tughluq era. It contains a mosque, built with yellow and blue enamelled bricks, and an exact replica of a traditional Turkish bath or *hamam*. The most striking mosque, the **Atala Masjid**, just outside the fort, dates to the Sharqi period. It is embellished with recessed arches and ornamental fringes, and square courts surround the central structure. Though built on a grander scale, the 15th-century **Jami Masjid** borrows its basic architectural inspiration from the Atala Masjid.

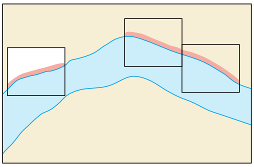


The grand façade of the Jami Masjid in Jaunpur

A view of the Taj Mahal *(see pp172–5)* from across the Yamuna river, Agra ▷

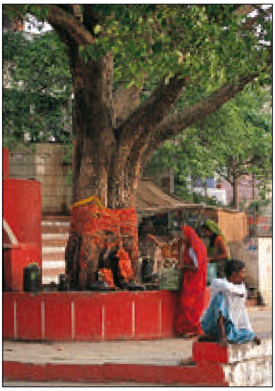
Varanasi ㉖

Also known as Kashi ("the City of Light"), or as Benares, Varanasi is situated on the west bank of the Ganges and is India's holiest Hindu city, with a spiritual and religious legacy that goes back nearly 3,000 years. This is the city of Shiva, the foremost among the 12 places where the god burrowed and then burst into the sky in a fiery pillar of light *(jyotirlinga)*. Sanctified by Shiva's all-pervading presence and the sacred Ganges, the 90 or so ghats along the river define the life and identity of Varanasi. Stretching from the southern Asi Ghat to the northern Adi Keshava Ghat, close to the Malviya Bridge, the ghats cover more than 6 km (4 miles). Lined with temples and shrines they reverberate with the endless cycle of Hindu religious practice – from daily rituals to profound rites of passage.

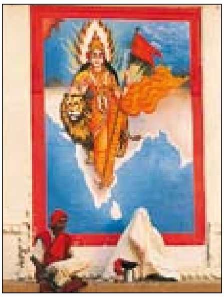


LOCATOR MAP
Asi Ghat to Shivala Ghat

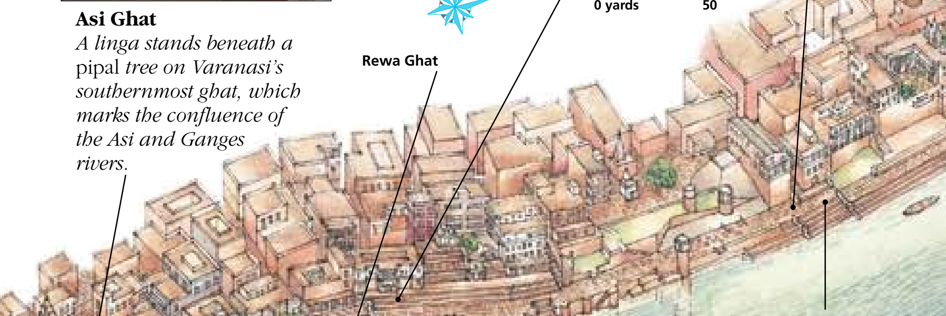
Tulsi Ghat
One of Varanasi's oldest sites, this ghat (earlier known as Lolarka Ghat), was renamed after the poet-saint Tulsidas, who lived here in the 16th century. His house and temple still stand nearby.

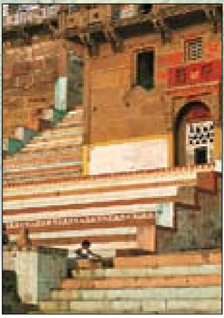


Asi Ghat
A linga stands beneath a pipal *tree on Varanasi's southernmost ghat, which marks the confluence of the Asi and Ganges rivers.*



Mural of goddess on the walls at Ganga Mahal Ghat





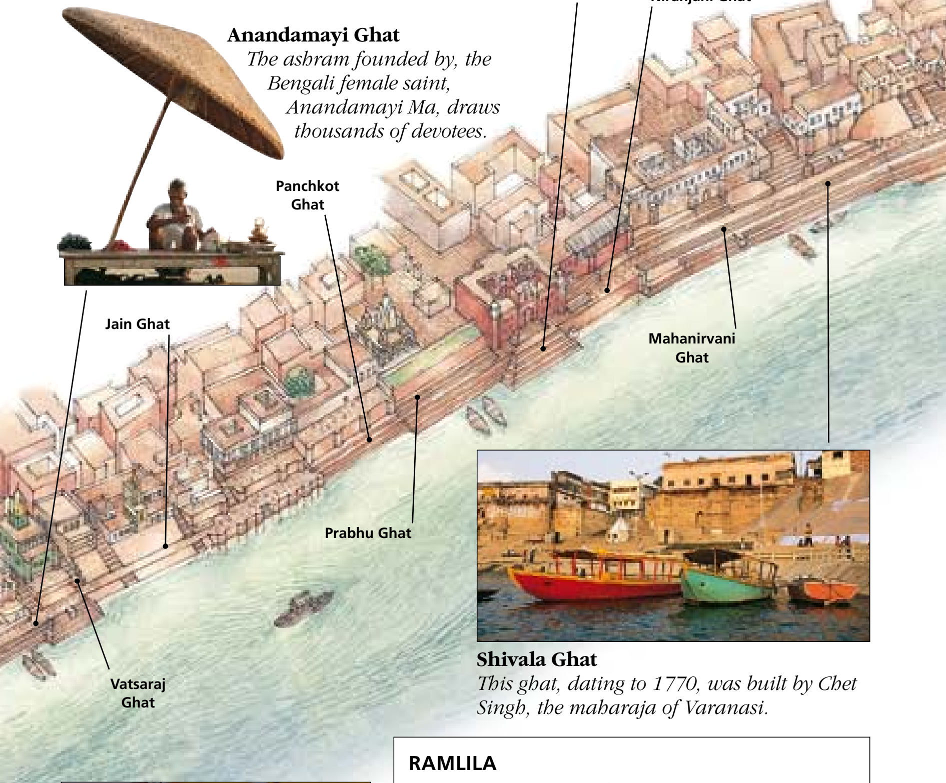
Janki Ghat
Brick-red steps distinguish Janki Ghat, in keeping with the Varanasi tradition of each ghat having its own distinctive colour.

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp695–7 and pp724–6

Chet Singh Ghat
The fort on this ghat marks the spot where Maharaja Chet Singh was defeated by the British in the mid-18th century.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Varanasi district. 286 km (178 miles) SE of Lucknow. 👥 *2,000,000.* ✈ *22 km (14 miles) NW of the city.* 🚆 🚌 ℹ *Parade Kothi, (0542) 220 8162, Varanasi Junction Station, (0542) 234 6370.* ⊖ *daily.* 🎭 *Shivratri (Feb/Mar), Ramlila (Sep/ Oct), Ganga Festival (Oct/Nov).*



Anandamayi Ghat
The ashram founded by, the Bengali female saint, Anandamayi Ma, draws thousands of devotees.

Shivala Ghat
This ghat, dating to 1770, was built by Chet Singh, the maharaja of Varanasi.

RAMLILA

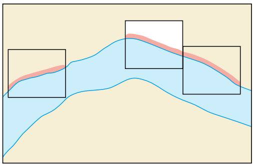
The Ramlila is a cycle of plays which tells the story of the *Ramayana (see p27)*, in which Lord Rama is exiled from his kingdom for 14 years. The Ramlila tradition was started in Varanasi by Tulsidas, author of the *Ramcharitmanas* (a popular version of the epic). Street performances take place in the evenings at different venues, in September/October, attracting thousands of spectators. The performance at the residence of the former maharaja at Ramnagar Fort is by far the most spectacular of the Ramlilas in Varanasi.

Young boys dressed as the main characters

Boat Building
Planks lie waiting to be jointed into boats, which are an essential mode of transportation along the busy river front.

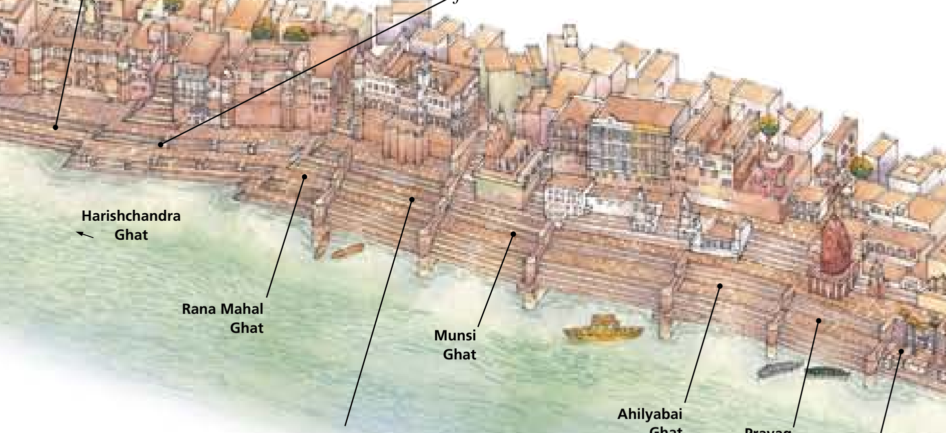
Varanasi: Digpatiya Ghat to Mir Ghat

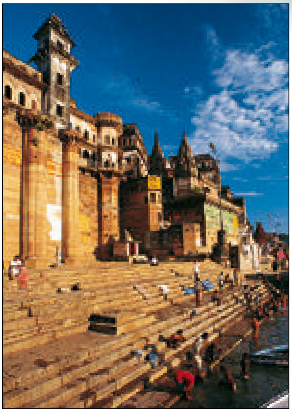
These centrally located ghats are the city's most sacred, and many of them were built under the patronage of India's erstwhile princely states, such as Darbhanga, Jaipur and Indore. One of Varanasi's two cremation ghats, Harishchandra Ghat, lies just to the south. Behind the holy Dasashvamedha Ghat meanders a winding lane known as Vishwanath Gali, lined with a multitude of shops that sell all manner of religious objects. It leads to the city's principal shrine, the Vishwanath Temple, said to be over 1,000 years old.



LOCATOR MAP
Digpatiya Ghat to Mir Ghat

Chausatthi Ghat
Lessons in the scriptures take place at this ghat, named after the temple of the Chausath Yoginis or 64 female divinities.



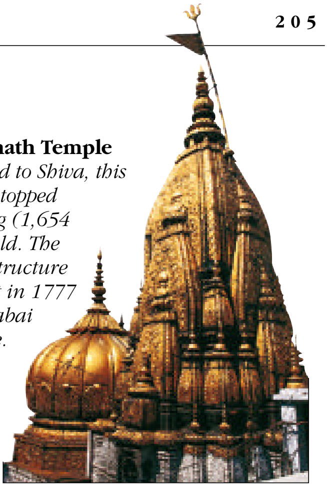


Darbhanga Ghat
The towers and turrets of old havelis, *built in the early 1900s by two princes of Bihar, dominate this ghat. Some of the massive pillars in these* havelis *are reminiscent of the Greek style.*

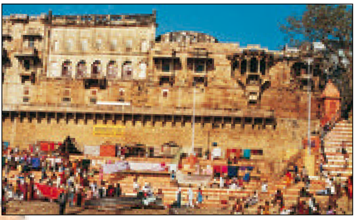
Dasashvamedha Ghat
This centrally located ghat, Varanasi's holiest spot, is named after the ten simultaneous horse sacrifices (dasashvamedh) *performed by Brahma the Creator. Rows of priests sit under bamboo parasols, ready to perform ritual prayers for the pilgrims that swarm here.*

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp695–7 and pp724–6

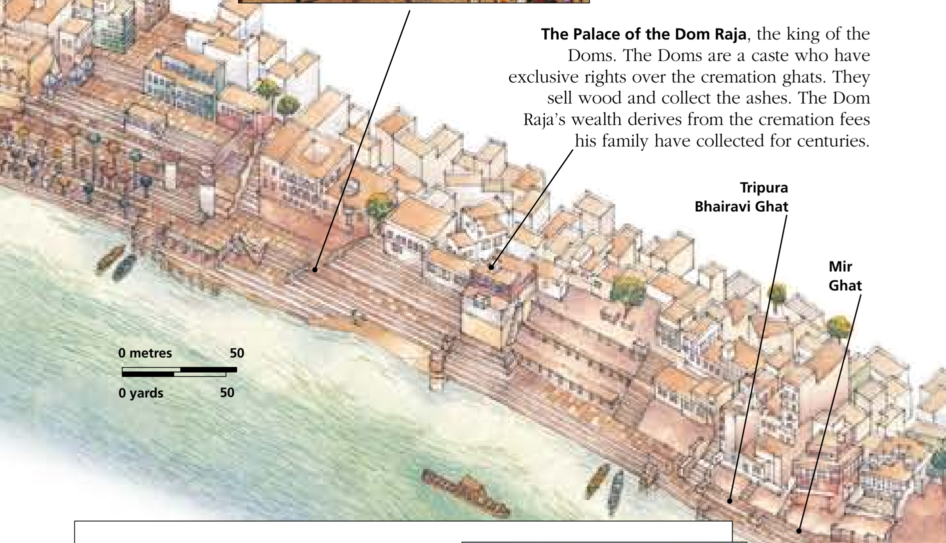
Vishwanath Gali
Lacquer jars, vermilion powder, bottled Ganges water, bangles and brocade, are all sold in the lane that leads to the Vishwanath Temple, the focal point of all worship in Varanasi.



Vishwanath Temple
Dedicated to Shiva, this shrine is topped by 750 kg (1,654 lbs) of gold. The present structure was built in 1777 by Ahilyabai of Indore.



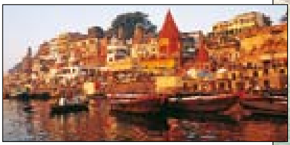
Man Mandir Ghat
Jai Singh II of Jaipur built one of his four Jantar Mantars (see pp358–9) *above Raja Man Singh's palace in 1710. Its sundial is visible from the ghat.*



The Palace of the Dom Raja, the king of the Doms. The Doms are a caste who have exclusive rights over the cremation ghats. They sell wood and collect the ashes. The Dom Raja's wealth derives from the cremation fees his family have collected for centuries.

BOAT RIDES

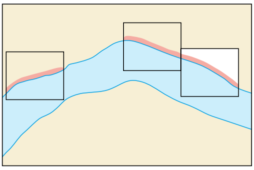
A sunrise boat ride is the highlight of a trip to Varanasi, when the temples along the river front are bathed in soft light. The people of Varanasi trickle out of the labyrinthine lanes and head for the ghats at dawn. Here, they wash clothes, perform yoga *asanas*, offer flowers and incense to the river, and take a ritual dip. The most fascinating ride is from Dasashvamedha to Manikarnika Ghat *(see p206)*. Dozens of rowing boats ply up and down the river, and can be hired by the hour. Rates are negotiable, so do fix the price before hiring one.



Dasashvamedha Ghat at sunrise

Varanasi: Nepali Ghat to Panchaganga Ghat

Along this stretch is the famed Manikarnika Ghat, one of the city's two cremation ghats. According to legend, Shiva's *mani* (crest jewel) and his consort Parvati's *karnika* (earring), fell into the nearby well while they were bathing, hence the name. Dying in Varanasi is a cause of celebration for Hindus, as it is believed to bestow instant salvation or *moksha* (liberation from the cycle of birth and death). It is said that Shiva whispers into the ears of the dying, and the old and infirm, sages and ordinary people, come here to breathe their last.



LOCATOR MAP

Nepali Ghat to Panchaganga Ghat

0 metres 50

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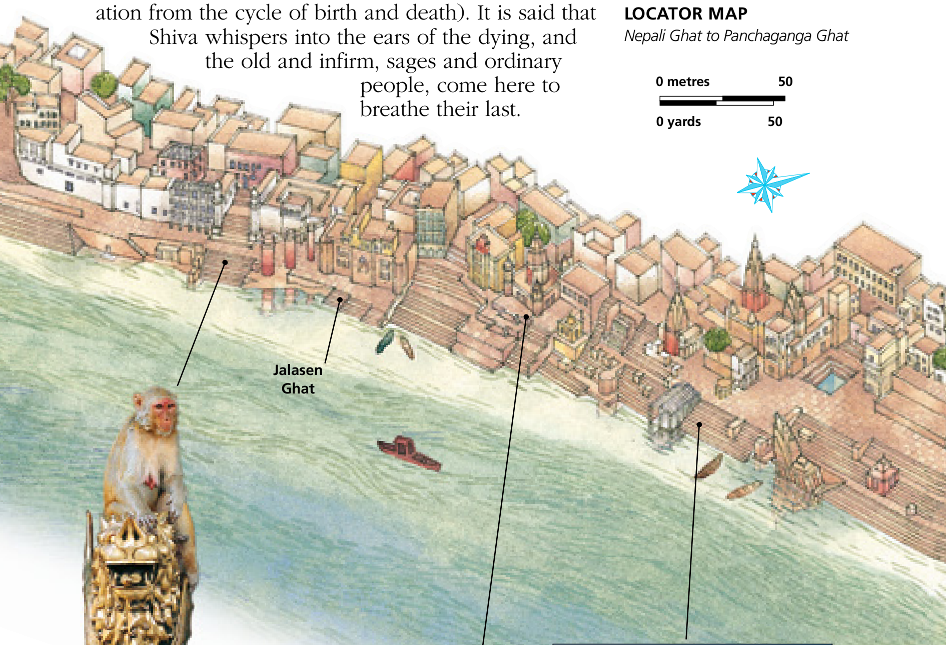
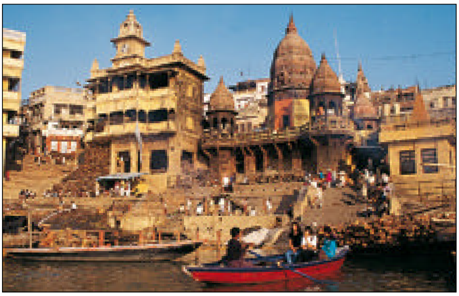
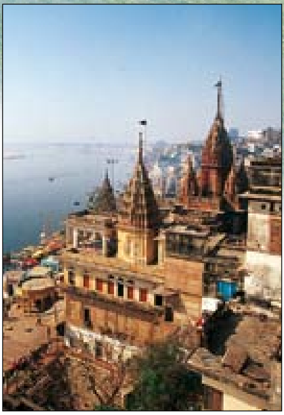


Nepali Ghat
A lion stands outside a pagoda-style, woodwork temple, built by the royal family of Nepal.



Manikarnika Ghat
Funeral pyres burn day and night at this cremation ghat, while bodies wrapped in shrouds lie on biers besides piles of wooden logs. In the middle of the ghat is the well (kund) *that Vishnu carved out with his discus before the Ganges flowed here.*



Scindia Ghat
The elaborate structures on this ghat were so top heavy that they collapsed, and were rebuilt by Daulat Rao Scindia of Gwalior in 1937. A temple stands half submerged in the river, with its sanctum knee deep in the water.

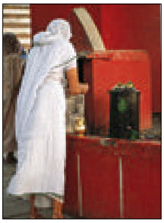
RITUALS PERFORMED IN THE GANGES

A vessel for holy water

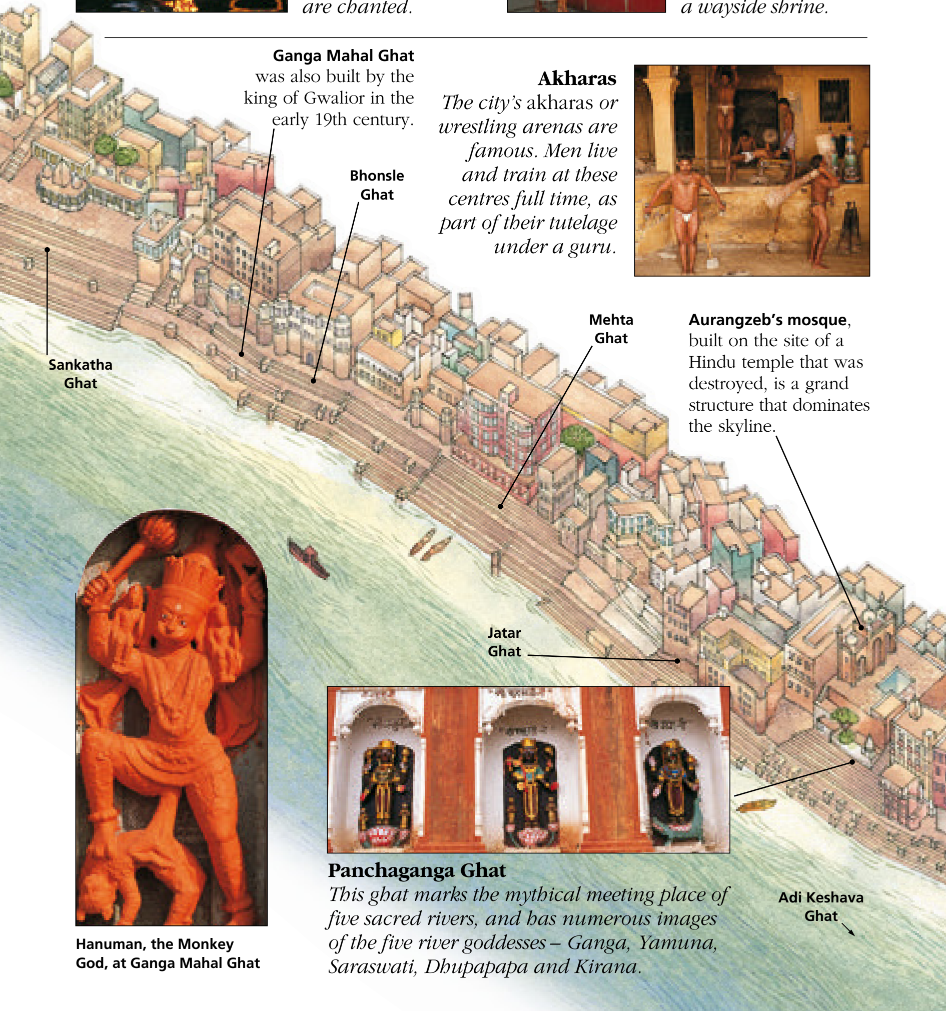
Although there are over 700 temples in Varanasi, none are more sacred than the river itself. The Ganges is worshipped as a living goddess, with the power to cleanse all earthly sins. Daily baths in her waters are advised by Hindu scriptures to prepare for the soul's final journey to liberation. Offerings of flowers and diyas floating down the river are a common and very pretty sight.

A Ritual Dip
Thousands come to Varanasi everyday, to bathe and pay obeisance to the Ganges.

Evening Aarti
The daily prayers (aarti) *at dawn and dusk, serve as salutations to the river. Oil lamps are offered and bells rung while sacred mantras are chanted.*



Wayside Shrine
A widow clad in white assembles flowers, incense and Ganges water in a small brass container, for paying homage at a wayside shrine.



Ganga Mahal Ghat was also built by the king of Gwalior in the early 19th century.

Aurangzeb's mosque, built on the site of a Hindu temple that was destroyed, is a grand structure that dominates the skyline.

Akharas
The city's akharas *or wrestling arenas are famous. Men live and train at these centres full time, as part of their tutelage under a guru.*

Hanuman, the Monkey God, at Ganga Mahal Ghat

Panchaganga Ghat
This ghat marks the mythical meeting place of five sacred rivers, and has numerous images of the five river goddesses – Ganga, Yamuna, Saraswati, Dhupapapa and Kirana.

Exploring Varanasi

Varanasi, one of the oldest cities in the world and a contemporary of Babylon and Nineveh, dates to the 7th century BC. This eternal city, where religion is an integral part of daily life, has drawn saints, poets and pilgrims through the ages. Behind the riverside ghats are narrow crowded lanes and bazaars, where people jostle with sacred cows, saffron-robed sadhus and devotees making offerings at roadside shrines. Varanasi is also renowned as a centre of Sanskrit learning and Hindu philosophy, attracting scholars and students from all over India. The Benares Hindu University, established in the early 1900s, perpetuates this tradition.

Dramatic ramparts of the Ramnagar Fort rising from the river bank

The narrow, winding Vishwanath Gali leads to the **Vishwanath Temple**, dedicated to Shiva, who is known here as Vishwanath, "Lord of the Universe". Painted floral carvings adorn its exterior and interior walls, and it is nearly always crowded. Adjacent to it lies the ancient **Jnana Vapi Well** ("Well of Wisdom"), whose waters are said to bring enlightenment. According to legend, this well is believed to contain the linga from the original Vishwanath Temple which was destroyed by the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb in the 17th century. The **Jnana Vapi Mosque** is built on the ruins of the temple.

Further south lies the sprawling **Benares Hindu University**, founded by the eminent Sanskrit scholar, Madan Mohan Malviya. Within the campus is the renowned **Bharat Kala Bhavan Museum**, known for having one of the country's best collections of Indian paintings. About 12,000 in number, they cover the period from the 11th century to the 20th century. Most impressive are the Mughal miniatures, notably a depiction of the Emperor Shah Jahan. The Indian sculpture section is equally impressive, housing around 2,000 pieces, from 300 BC to AD 1400. Among them are a fine 10th-century sculpture of the marriage of Shiva and Parvati and an 11th-century statue of Vishnu as Varaha *(see p679)*. The display of Gandhara sculpture is also noteworthy.

The 17th-century **Ramnagar Fort**, lying across the river beyond Asi Ghat, has been home to the maharajas of Varanasi for 400 years. Although now in a state of disrepair, the palace still retains its charm. Ornamented swords, photographs of tiger shoots and visits by the King and Queen of Belgium line the walls. The Durbar Hall now houses the museum, where numerous objects are on display including palanquins and elephant howdahs.

🏛 **Bharat Kala Bhavan**
Tel *(0542) 230 7621.* ○ *Mon–Sat.* 🎟

🏰 **Ramnagar Fort and Museum**
○ *daily.* 🎟

Sarnath ㉗

Varanasi district. 10 km (6 miles) NE of Varanasi. 🚌 🎪 *Buddha Mahotsava (May).*

To Buddhists, Sarnath is as sacred as Varanasi is to Hindus. The Buddha came to the Deer Park here in 528 BC, to preach the Dharmachakra, or the Wheel of Law, his first major sermon after gaining enlightenment *(see p221)*. Sarnath was then one of ancient India's greatest centres of learning, visited by Chinese travellers Fa-Hsien and Hiuen Tsang who wrote of its flourishing monasteries.

The central monument of the existing complex is the 5th-century AD **Dhamekh Stupa**, which is built at the site where the Buddha is believed to have delivered his sermon to five disciples. To its west, are the remains of the Dharmarajika Stupa, built by the Mauryan emperor Ashoka *(see p42)* to preserve the Buddha's relics. The complex also has several smaller monasteries and temples, as well as a Bodhi Tree, planted in 1931, and the statue of Anagarika Dharmapala, the founder of the society that maintained Sarnath and Bodh Gaya *(see pp222–3)*.

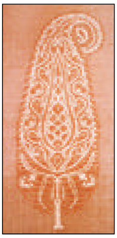
The **Archaeological Museum** exhibits a superb collection of Buddhist artifacts. The highlight is the Ashokan lion capital in polished sandstone *(see p4)*, India's national emblem.

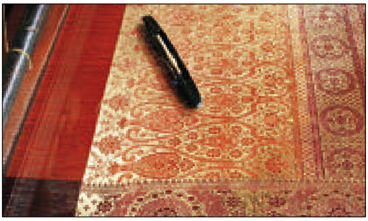
🏛 **Archaeological Museum**
Tel *(0542) 258 5002.* ○ *Sat–Thu.* 🎟

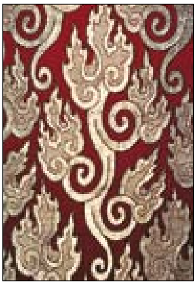
Dhamekh Stupa, Sarnath's principal monument

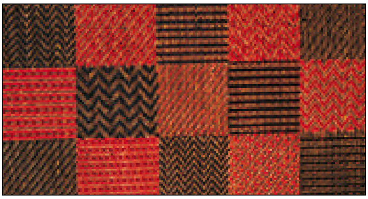
Brocades from Varanasi

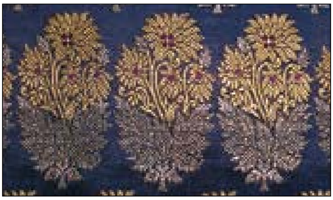
Varanasi, India's most ancient pilgrimage centre, is also famous for its textiles. Renowned for its gossamer-fine cotton weaves for over 2000 years, its weaving traditions acquired new splendour from the 16th century onwards, with the patronage of the Mughal emperors. Varanasi's weavers soon became adept at weaving silk with gold and silver thread, to create sumptuous brocades for royal costumes and court furnishings, embellished with the exquisite floral, animal and geometric motifs favoured by the Mughals. They also produced brocades for Tibetan monasteries, decorated with Buddhist motifs such as clouds, lotus flowers and flames. Today, a wide range of brocade saris, scarves, and Tibetan-style fabrics are made and sold in the city.

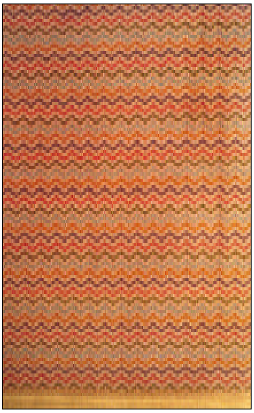

Paisley pattern on silk

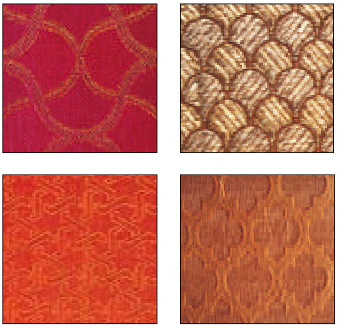

The pallav, *the culminating end piece of a sari* (see p30), *is the most elaborately designed part of the sari. Its rich and complex weave requires very fine and deft craftsmanship.*


Gyaser textiles *were traditionally woven for trade with Tibet. This contemporary textile has taken a single element (the flame) from a ritual cloth to create a stunning pattern.*


A panel *of more than 600 geometric motifs has been specially created as a design directory for Varanasi's brocade weavers.*


The flower motif, *the classic* latifa buta, *combines gold and silver threads in a style known as Ganga-Yamuna, after the two rivers whose waters are pale and dark.*


The Panch Ranga sari, *or the five-colour sari, creates a* leheriya *(wave) design in alternating colours of blue, orange, purple, pink and green, with a patterned edging in gold. The sheer richness of the design and colours are its distinguishing features.*


Contemporary brocades *recreate fish scale patterns in gold and silver threads, inspired by* Gyaser textiles, *as well as* jali *or trellis designs used in Mughal architecture.*

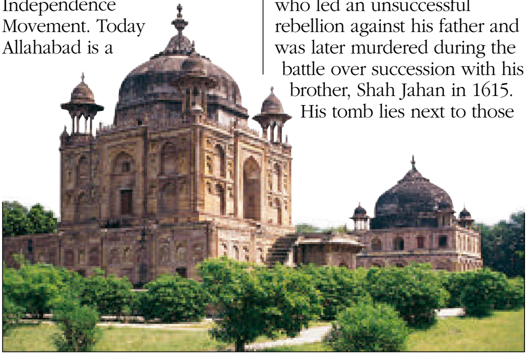
The creeper-covered ramparts of Allahabad Fort, built by the Mughal emperor Akbar

Allahabad ㉘

Allahabad district. 227 km (141 miles) SE of Lucknow. 👥 *990,300.* 🚉 🚌
ℹ *Tourist Bungalow, 35 MG Marg, Civil Lines, (0532) 260 1837.* 🎪
Kumbh Mela (every 12 years).

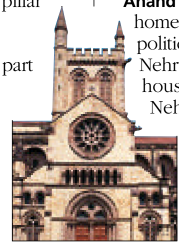
Allahabad's sacred location at the confluence *(sangam)* of three rivers – the Ganges, the Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati – has given it a cultural, political and religious importance for nearly 3,000 years. Hiuen Tsang, the Buddhist monk and scholar *(see p219)*, visited the town, then known as Prayag, in AD 643, and wrote in great detail of its prosperity and fame.

In the 16th century it was captured by the Mughals who renamed it Allahabad. Later, the British maintained a large military presence in the city and established the law courts and the university. Jawaharlal Nehru *(see p57)*, India's first prime minister, was born here in 1889, and the city later became a major centre of the Independence Movement. Today Allahabad is a quietly prosperous provincial centre, the broad, tree-lined avenues of the Civil Lines area contrasting with the congested bustle of the old city.



The tombs of Prince Khusrau and his sister, Khusrau Bagh

Allahabad Fort was built in 1583 by Akbar, who had a 3rd-century BC Ashokan pillar brought here from Kausambi. The pillar, unfortunately, is in a part of the fort that is not open to the public. On the fort's eastern side, is a temple complex with an undying banyan tree, the **Akshaivata**. Legend has it that anyone who leapt from its branches would achieve salvation from the endless cycle of rebirths. After too many such attempts, the tree was fenced off, and a special permit is required from the local tourist office to view it.



Gothic façade of the All Saints Cathedral

Khusrau Bagh, a tranquil Mughal garden on the western edge of town, is named after Emperor Jahangir's eldest son who led an unsuccessful rebellion against his father and was later murdered during the battle over succession with his brother, Shah Jahan in 1615. His tomb lies next to those of his sister and his mother. The latter, a Rajput princess from Jaipur, distraught by the war between her husband and her son, took an overdose of opium. The *chhatris* on her tomb show Rajput influence.

Anand Bhavan, ancestral home of India's premier political dynasty, the Nehru-Gandhi family, now houses a museum of Nehru memorabilia and chronicles the high points of the Independence Movement. Close by, in the Civil Lines area, is the fantastically arched and turreted **Muir College** built in 1870, and regarded a fine example of Indo-Saracenic architecture. Some glazed blue and white tiles still cling to the dome and a single tower soars to a height of 60 m (197 ft). Across the road is the **Allahabad Museum** which has an interesting collection of terracottas from Kausambi and some 10th-to 13th-century sculpture from the Chandela era. Across Civil Lines to the west stands the **All Saints Cathedral**. Constructed in 1877 and designed by William Emmerson, architect of the Victoria Memorial in Kolkata *(see pp274–5)*, it is lined with Jaipur marble inside.

Allahabad Fort
● *closed to the public.*

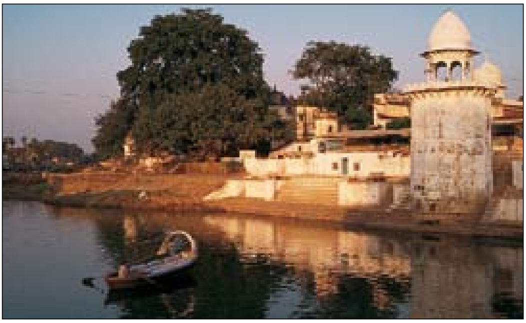
Anand Bhavan
○ *Tue–Sun.* 🎟

Allahabad Museum
○ *Tue–Sun.* 🎟

Environs

Kausambi, is 63 km (39 miles) and about an hour's drive from Allahabad on the eastern bank of the Yamuna. Excavated ruins of a stupa, a palace and extensive ramparts lie within a 2-km (1.3-mile) radius. While local legend holds that the city was built by the Pandavas, heroes of the *Mahabharata (see p26)*, excavations reveal that a Buddhist community flourished here between 600 BC and AD 600. The Buddha himself came here to preach. The site contains the remains of a paved brick road, small houses, each with a ceramic drain, and the stump of an Ashokan pillar dating to the 3rd century BC (a second pillar was moved to the Allahabad Fort). Some terra-cotta artifacts and seals from 200 BC which were found here are now in the Allahabad Museum. Surrounded by fields and villages, with the river in the background, Kausambi has an aura of great serenity.

The remains of mud and brick ramparts at Kausambi



Chitrakoot's Ramghat, with temples on the banks of the Mandakini river

Chitrakoot ㉙

Banda district. 128 km (80 miles) SW of Allahabad. 🚆 *Karwi, 8 km (5 miles) NE of town centre, then taxi or bus.* 🚌 ℹ *UPSTDC Tourism Bungalow, (05198) 224 219.* ⊖ *daily.*

This pilgrim town on the banks of the Mandakini river, though in neighbouring Madhya Pradesh, is easier to access from Allahabad. Chitrakoot, literally "the Hill of Many Wonders" refers to the forested **Kamadgiri Hill**, where according to the *Ramayana*, Rama, Sita and Lakshman spent a portion of their 14-year exile. Below the hill lies **Hanuman Dhara**, a natural spring that flows over a delightful image of the monkey god, Hanuman, placed in a recess. Dotted with numerous temples, and full of sadhus, the town has a unique charm. Boat rides from the attractive **Ramghat**, the town's main ghat, provide an impressive view of the temples along the river bank.

Kalinjar Fort ㉚

Banda district. 190 km (118 miles) W of Allahabad. 🚆 *Banda, 53 km (33 miles) N of Kalinjar Fort, then taxi or bus.* 🚌 ⊖ *daily.*

One of India's oldest forts, Kalinjar was called Kanagora by Ptolemy, the 2nd-century AD Greek geographer. Its strategic location on the route between North and South India made it a coveted target for many rulers. It has thus had a very turbulent history, and was successively occupied by many medieval rulers, until it fell to the Afghan ruler Sher Shah Sur *(see p79)* in 1545 .

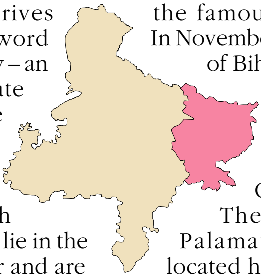
Seven gateways, named after seven planets, and lined with sculptures and carvings lead to the fort. These include a giant Shiva with 18 arms and a dancing Ganesha. The **Neelkanth Temple** inside the fort, is dedicated to Shiva. Still in worship, the temple's inner sanctum contains an ancient linga.

THE KUMBH MELA

Pilgrims at Allahabad's Kumbh Mela in 2001

Hindu legend has it that during a war over the urn *(kumbh)* of immortal nectar *(amrit)* between the gods and demons, Vishnu gave the urn to Garuda, his winged mount. During his flight, four drops of the nectar fell on four places, Nasik *(see p474)*, Ujjain *(see p246)*, Haridwar *(see p184)* and Allahabad. A Kumbh Mela is thus held at each spot in turn, every three years, when certain planetary configurations, transform the waters of the Ganges into nectar. Pilgrims from all over India, converge at the Kumbh Mela to wash away their sins, making it the world's largest religious gathering. Specially built tent-cities and stalls spring up to cater to the influx. At Allahabad's Kumbh Mela (Jan–Feb 2001) almost 30 million devotees took a bath on Mauni Amavasya (24 Jan), the most sacred of the six main bathing days. The next Kumbh Melas will be held in Haridwar in 2010 and in Allahabad in 2013.

BIHAR & JHARKHAND



The name Bihar derives from the Sanskrit word *vihara*, or monastery – an apt appellation for a state which was the birthplace of Buddhism. Major sites associated with the life and teachings of the Buddha, such as Bodh Gaya, Nalanda and Rajgir, lie in the dry plains of central Bihar and are the main attractions for visitors to the state. Northern Bihar is a fertile agricultural plain, watered by the River Ganges and its tributaries, where the famous Patna rice is grown. In November 2000, the southern part of Bihar became the new state of Jharkhand, which is dominated by a scenic and thickly forested highland called the Chhota Nagpur Plateau. The game sanctuaries of Palamau and Hazaribagh are located here. Jharkhand is rich in mineral resources, and is also the home of several indigenous tribes, believed to be among the earliest settlers of the Indian subcontinent.

SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

Towns & Cities

- Jamshedpur ⑯
- Munger ⑤
- Patna ①
- Ranchi ⑮

Hill Stations

- Netarhat ⑭

Historic Sites

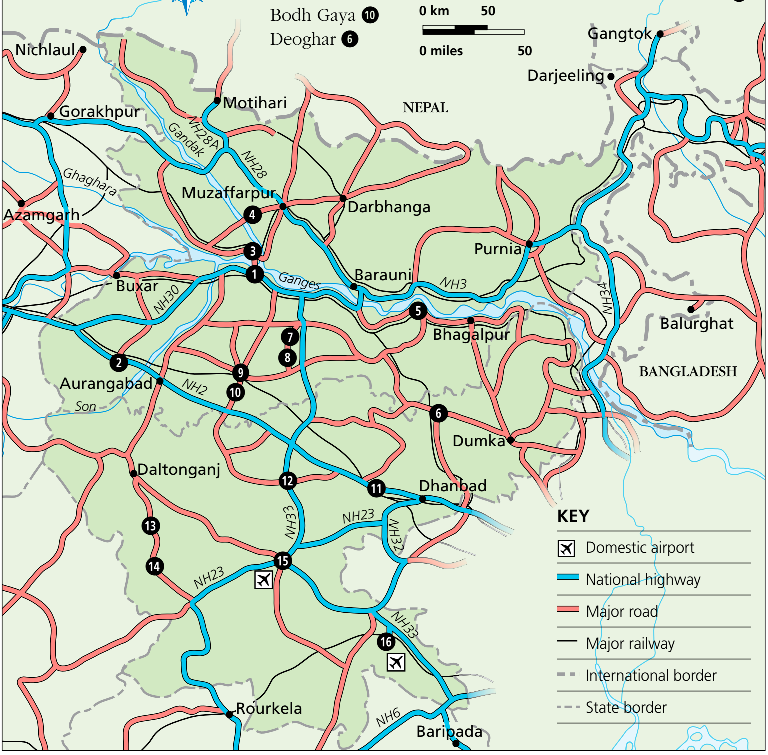
- Nalanda ⑦
- Rajgir ⑧
- Sasaram ②
- Vaishali ④

Temple Towns & Holy Places

- Bodh Gaya ⑩
- Deoghar ⑥
- Gaya ⑨
- Parasnath ⑪
- Sonepur ③

National Parks

- Hazaribagh Wildlife Sanctuary ⑫
- Palamau National Park ⑬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Nichlaul
Gorakhpur
Motihari
NEPAL
Gangtok
Darjeeling
NH28A
Gandak
NH28
Ghaghara
Muzaffarpur
Darbhanga
Azamgarh
Purnia
Buxar
Ganges
Barauni
NH3
NH30
NH34
Bhagalpur
Balurghat
BANGLADESH
Aurangabad
NH2
Son
Dumka
Daltonganj
Dhanbad
NH33
NH23
NH32
NH23
NH33
Rourkela
NH6
Baripada
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14
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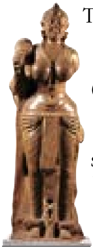
16
KEY
Domestic airport
National highway
Major road
Major railway
International border
State border

◁ The Mahabodhi Temple at Bodh Gaya, the most important Buddhist pilgrimage site

Patna ❶



Didarganj Yakshi

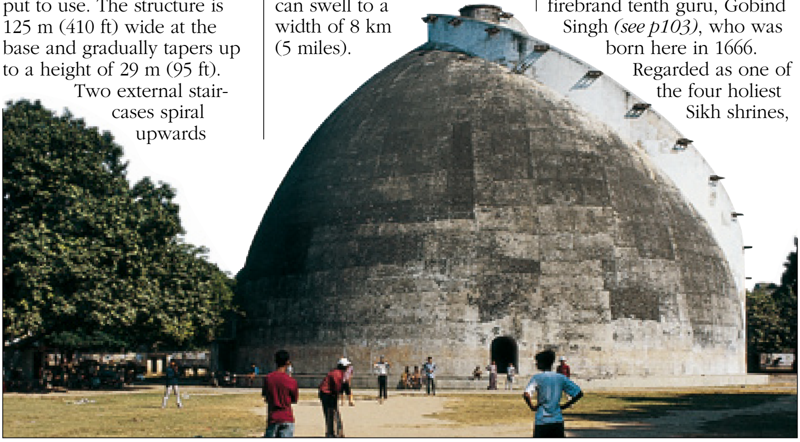
The capital of Bihar is a modern city with ancient roots going back to 600 BC. During the reign of the Maurya and Gupta empires *(see p42)* Patna, then known as Pataliputra, was renowned as one of the great cities of Asia, but today it is a congested urban sprawl, stretching along the banks of the Ganges. West Patna, laid out by the British, has gracious mansions and administrative buildings, while the eastern end comprises the old city, a warren of crowded lanes surrounding medieval monuments and bustling bazaars.

A view of Patna, lying on the south bank of the Ganges

Golghar

○ *daily.*

Patna's signature landmark, the Golghar (literally "round house"), is an extraordinary dome that resembles a giant beehive. Built in 1786 by Captain John Garstin as a silo to store grain during the famines that occurred frequently in those days, the Golghar was never actually put to use. The structure is 125 m (410 ft) wide at the base and gradually tapers up to a height of 29 m (95 ft). Two external staircases spiral upwards along its sides, with platforms to rest on along the way. The idea was to haul the grain up, and pour it down a hole at the top into the dome's pit, which had a capacity of 124,285 tonnes. A remarkable echo can be heard inside the structure. During the monsoon, the dome's summit offers impressive views of the Ganges which, in this season, can swell to a width of 8 km (5 miles).



The beehive-shaped Golghar, built as a granary in the 18th century

State Museum

Tel *(0612) 223 5731.* ○ *Tue–Sun.*

Some remarkable treasures are displayed in the State Museum. Among them is the Mauryan-era (probably 3rd century BC) polished stone image of the Didarganj Yakshi (female attendant), considered a masterpiece of Indian sculpture. Other highlights include Gandharan style statues of Bodhisattvas; outstanding Buddha images in bronze and black stone, dating from the Pala period (8th–12th centuries); terracotta figurines, ancient Buddhist scriptures and a collection of Tibetan *thangkas*. The museum also boasts a 15-m (49-ft) long fossilized tree trunk, believed to be 200 million years old.

Khudabaksh Library

Tel *(0612) 267 0209.*

www.kblibrary.bih.nic.in ○ *Sat–Thu.*

Founded in 1900, this library has a renowned collection of rare Persian and Arabic manuscripts, including a group of beautiful illuminated medieval Korans, and superb Mughal miniature paintings. Its rarest exhibits are volumes salvaged from the sacking of the Moorish University in Cordoba, Spain, in the 11th century, though how they found their way to India still remains a mystery.

Harmandir Sahib

○ *daily.*

This historic Sikh gurdwara marks the birthplace of the firebrand tenth guru, Gobind Singh *(see p103)*, who was born here in 1666. Regarded as one of the four holiest Sikh shrines,

The eclectic private collection at the Jalan Museum

the marble temple was built in the 19th century by Maharaja Ranjit Singh *(see p104)*. On the floor above the main sanctum is a museum with the guru's relics.

Jalan Museum

By appointment. ***Tel*** *(0612) 264 1121.*
Also known as Qila ("Fort") House, this museum's eclectic collection, gathered by a 19th-century ancestor of the Jalan family, includes Chinese paintings, Mughal jade and silverware, Napoleon's bed and Marie Antoinette's Sèvres porcelain. Qila House itself is an interesting structure, built on the ruins of a 16th-century fort constructed by the Afghan ruler, Sher Shah Sur *(see p79)*.

Kumrahar

○ *Tue–Sun.* ⊘
This site contains the ruins of the ancient city of Pataliputra. Excavations have unearthed elaborately carved wooden ramparts, polished sandstone pillars and the remains of a vast Mauryan assembly hall that is said to have stood here in the 2nd century BC. A museum here displays some of these finds, which date from an era when Patna was described by Megasthenes, the Greek envoy to the Mauryan court, as "a city of light, where even wooden walls shine bright as glass".

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

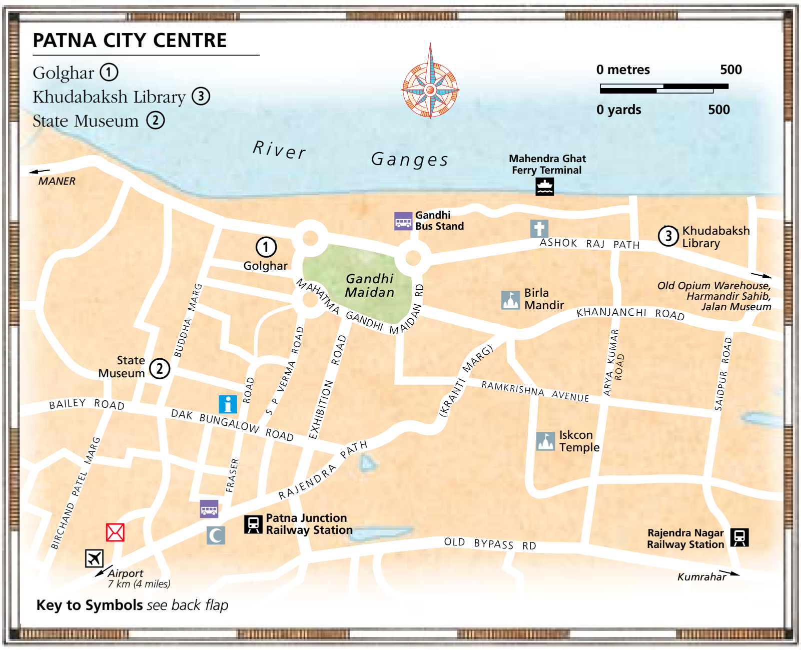
Patna district. 1,015 km (631 miles) E of Delhi. 👥 *1,377,000.* ✈ *7 km (4 miles) W of the city centre.* 🚆 🚌 ℹ *Bihar Tourism, JP Loknayak Bhavan, Fraser Rd, (0612) 222 5411.* ⊖ *Mon–Sat.* 🎉 *Patliputra Mahotsava (Mar).*

Old Opium Warehouse

Gulzarbagh. ○ *Mon–Fri.*
Located in a walled compound on the river bank, the opium warehouse of the East India Company is now the Government Printing Press. Opium was packaged in its three long, porticoed buildings and sent by boat to Kolkata.

Environs

Maner, 30 km (19 miles) west of Patna, is a major centre of Islamic learning. It has the fine 16th-century mausoleum of the Sufi saint Hazrat Makhdum Yahya Maneri. It is also famous for *laddoos*, a confection made of gramflour and molasses.


PATNA CITY CENTRE
Golghar ①
Khudabaksh Library ③
State Museum ②
0 metres 500
0 yards 500
River Ganges
MANER
Mahendra Ghat Ferry Terminal
Gandhi Bus Stand
ASHOK RAJ PATH
③ Khudabaksh Library
① Golghar
Gandhi Maidan
MAHATMA GANDHI MAIDAN RD
Birla Mandir
Old Opium Warehouse, Harmandir Sahib, Jalan Museum
KHANJANCHI ROAD
BUDDHA MARG
State Museum ②
S P VERMA ROAD
EXHIBITION ROAD
(KRANTI MARG)
RAMKRISHNA AVENUE
ARYA KUMAR ROAD
SAIDPUR ROAD
BAILEY ROAD
DAK BUNGALOW ROAD
ROAD
Iskcon Temple
BIRCHAND PATEL MARG
FRASER
RAJENDRA PATH
Patna Junction Railway Station
OLD BYPASS RD
Rajendra Nagar Railway Station
Airport 7 km (4 miles)
Kumrahar
Key to Symbols see back flap

The magnificent 16th-century tomb of the Afghan ruler Sher Shah Sur at Sasaram

Sasaram ❷

Rohtas district. 158 km (98 miles) SW of Patna. 🚆 🚌

The dusty town of Sasaram, a three-hour drive west of Patna on the historic Grand Trunk Road *(see p179)*, is famous for the **Mausoleum of Sher Shah Sur**, the great Afghan ruler *(see p79)*. This mid-16th-century architectural masterpiece is, to quote architectural historian Percy Brown, a testament to, "the aesthetic capacity of the Indian architect at its greatest, and his genius at its highest".

With a spectacular setting in the middle of an artificial lake, the pyramidal sandstone structure rises in five tiers to a height of 45 m (148 ft). The first two tiers comprise of a stepped basement and a high terrace that seems to emerge from the water, with a pavilion at each corner. The octagonal tomb is set on this plinth, and tapers towards the dome in three elegant layers of arches, crenellated parapets and small pillared kiosks. The broad dome is crowned by a large gilded lotus finial. All these elements combine to create a superbly proportioned structure that appears to float above the lake.

Curiously, the tomb is orientated eight degrees off its main axis – a mistake that the architect, Aliwal Khan, has skilfully disguised. The brilliant yellow and blue tiles are still seen in places. Nearby is the tomb of Sher Shah's father, Hasan Sur, built by the same architect.

Sonepur ❸

Saran district. 25 km (16 miles) N of Patna. 🚌 ℹ *Bihar Tourism, Patna, (0612) 222 5411.* 🎪 *Sonepur Mela (Oct/Nov).*

North of Patna, across the 7.5-km (5-mile) long Mahatma Gandhi Bridge over the Ganges, is the little town of Sonepur, known for its annual *mela*, reputedly the largest livestock fair in Asia. The month-long fair begins on the full moon of Kartik Purnima, which usually falls in October or November. The *mela* site is a sandy bank at the confluence of the Ganges and Gandak rivers, and attracts millions of sadhus, pilgrims and local rural families, as well as livestock traders from all over India. On sale are elephants, camels, horses and cows, and an array of exotic birds. As a sideshow to the buying and selling of animals, grain and fodder, are several troupes of folk singers and magicians, *nautanki* (vaudeville) groups, dance bands, wrestlers and gymnasts, all exhibiting their skills on the sands. In between trading and entertainment, everyone takes a holy dip in the river during this most auspicious period in the Hindu calendar. The state tourism department sets up a tourist village a week in advance of the fair, and cottages and tents can be booked at their office in Patna. Even if buying an elephant (prices begin at about US$200) is not on a visitor's agenda, the Sonepur Mela, with its colourful combination of religion, entertainment and commerce, is an unforgettable experience.

A mobile zoo at Sonepur's huge cattle fair

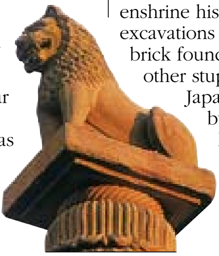
Elephants being bathed during the Sonepur Mela

Vaishali ❹

Vaishali district. 55 km (34 miles) N of Patna. 🚌 ℹ *Tourist Information Centre, Vaishali (06225) 284 425.*

Set in the lush green landscape of north Bihar, dotted with groves of banana and litchi trees, Vaishali is an important religious site. Mahavira, founder of the Jain faith *(see p396)*, is said to have been born here in 599 BC. It is also the place where the Buddha preached his last sermon *(see p221)*. In the 6th century BC, Vaishali was a flourishing city under the Lichhavi rulers who established one of the world's first city republics here. A well-preserved **Mauryan Stone Pillar**, dating from the 3rd century BC, with a life-size lion sitting atop it, is located 4 km (2.5 miles) west of the Tourist Lodge.

Close to the pillar is the **Ramkund Tank**, also known as the Monkey Tank, which is now a stagnant pond. According to legend, it was dug by monkeys, who offered the hungry Buddha a bowl of honey here – a scene often depicted in Buddhist sculpture and painting. Also near the pillar, are the ruins of a 5th-century BC brick stupa. It is believed to have been built by the Lichhavi rulers soon after the Buddha's death to enshrine his ashes. Ongoing excavations have revealed the brick foundations of various other stupas. In 1996, Japanese Buddhists built a temple and a huge white **Vishwa Shanti Stupa** ("World Peace Stupa"), re-establishing Vaishali on the Buddhist pilgrimage circuit.

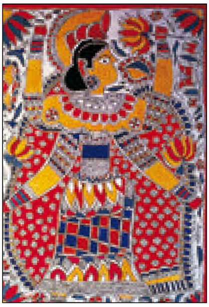


The lion atop the 3rd-century BC pillar, Vaishali

The renowned Bihar School of Yoga, inside Munger Fort

MADHUBANI PAINTING

The vibrant Madhubani folk paintings *(see p81)* of north Bihar have now gained international acclaim and popularity. Painted on the walls of village homes by women, Madhubani art features motifs and themes inspired by Hindu mythology, nature and festivals, as well as by everyday life. Especially intricate compositions are created for the *kohbar*, or bridal room, for the wedding night, usually featuring a god and goddess surrounded by a host of small birds and animals, and watched over by the sun, moon and stars. In recent years, with Madhubani women having participated in international exhibitions in foreign countries, new motifs have crept into their work, such as skyscrapers, aeroplanes and women in stiletto heels. The vibrant colours used are made of vegetable and mineral dyes, and the paintings are drawn with thin bamboo sticks. Madhubani paintings are now also being done on paper and fabric, and are widely available for sale in many Indian cities.



A Madhubani painting, with its strong lines and colours

Munger ❺

Munger district. 180 km (112 miles) E of Patna. 🚆 ℹ *Tourist Information Centre, Fort Area, Munger (06344) 222 392.*

Picturesquely located on the banks of the Ganges, Munger is home to the famous **Bihar School of Yoga**, established by Swami Satyanand, and now run by his disciple Swami Niranjananand. The school lies within the 15th-century Munger Fort, and welcomes visitors. The fort was successively occupied by the Mughals, various regional rulers and the British. Near the north gate of the fort is an 18th-century British cemetery with ornate pyramid-shaped tombs.

Bihar School of Yoga
Tel *(06344) 222 430.* ○ *daily.*

Deoghar ❻

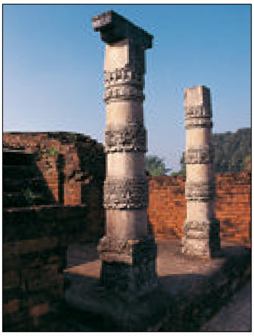
Deoghar district. 180 km (112 miles) E of Patna. 🚆 🚌 ℹ *Tourist Information Centre, (06432) 222 422.* *Mela (Jul/Aug).*

Deoghar's **Baidyanath Dham** is an important Shiva temple in India. It is said to mark the spot where the heart of Shiva's consort Parvati fell, as the grief-stricken Shiva carried her corpse across the earth *(see p279)*. An object of special worship is the linga inside the temple, one of Shiva's 12 *jyotirlingas (see p202)*, believed to have miraculously materialized out of light. The month-long annual *mela* here attracts over 100,000 pilgrims every day.

Nalanda ❼

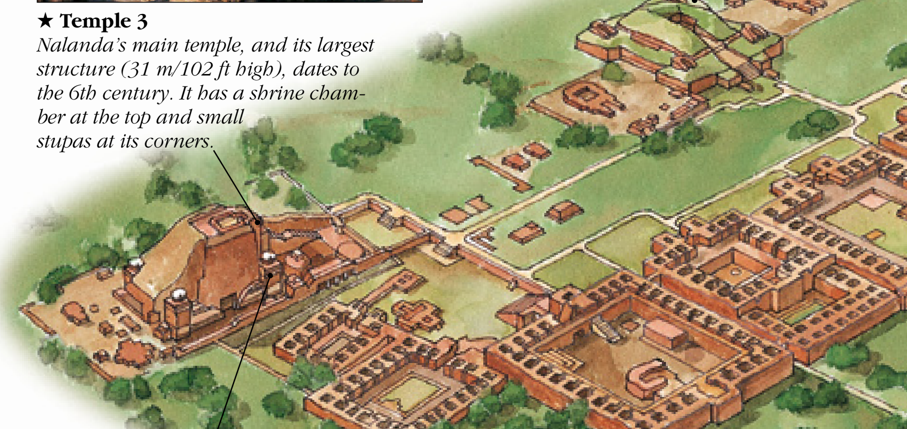
Bodhisattva in Temple 3

Once the most prestigious centre of learning in Asia, the Buddhist University of Nalanda, founded in the 5th century AD, had over 5,000 international students and teachers, and a library of nine million manuscripts. Built on a hallowed site where the Buddha had often stayed, Nalanda flourished until AD 1199, when it was looted and destroyed by the Turkish raider, Bakhtiar Khalji. The evocative ruins of its monasteries and temples still convey a vivid impression of the serene and ordered life of contemplation and learning that prevailed here.



Temple 12
The remains of a torana *stand in front of this 7th-century temple, which faces the row of monasteries.*

★ Temple 3
Nalanda's main temple, and its largest structure (31 m/102 ft high), dates to the 6th century. It has a shrine chamber at the top and small stupas at its corners.



Monastery 1A was probably built by a king of Sumatra in the 9th century.

0 metres 50
0 yards 50

★ Votive Stupas
Located in the courtyard surrounding Temple 3, these have plaster images of standing Bodhisattvas and seated Buddhas.

STAR FEATURES

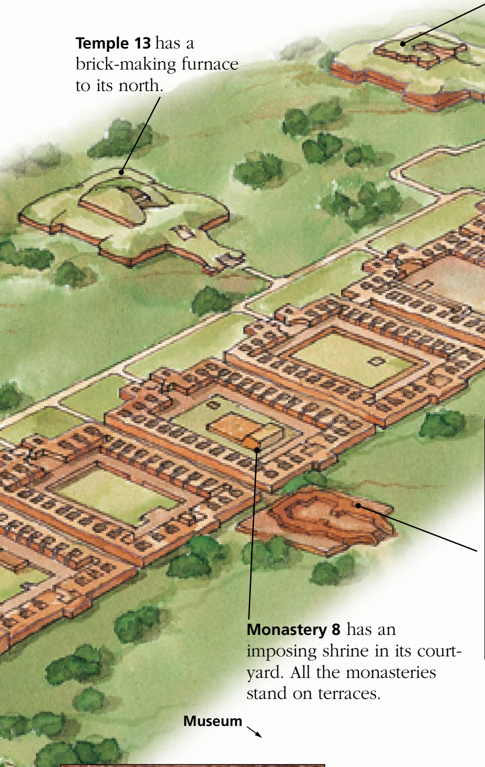
- ★ Temple 3
- ★ Votive Stupas
- ★ Dado Panels from Temple 2

For hotels and restaurants in this region see p697 and p726

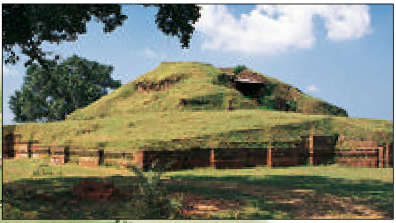
A View of the Monasteries
Monks' cells surround a courtyard in each of the 11 monasteries. The ruins display skilful brickwork.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Nalanda district. 90 km (56 miles) S of Patna. 🚌 *from Patna.* ℹ *Bihar Tourism, Nav Nalanda, near bus station.* ○ *daily.* ▨ **Museum** ○ *Sat–Thu.* ▨



Temple 13 has a brick-making furnace to its north.

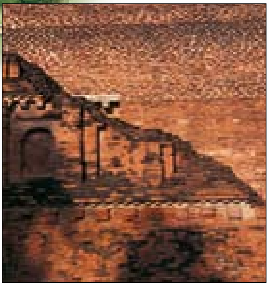


Temple 14
Traces of painting can be seen here in a niche with a pedestal, where a large image of the Buddha once stood.

Monastery 8 has an imposing shrine in its courtyard. All the monasteries stand on terraces.

Museum ↘

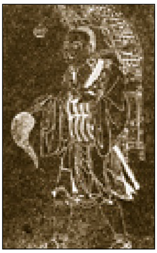
★ Dado Panels from Temple 2
This 7th-century temple's basement, which is all that remains, has an elaborately sculpted dado with over 200 panels carved with deities, animals and floral motifs.



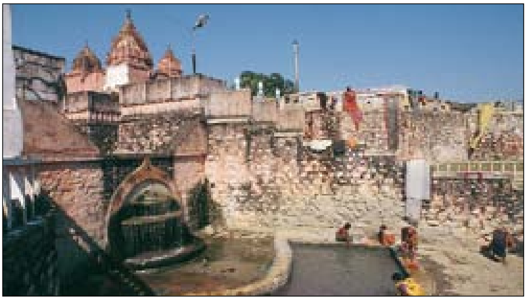
Brickwork
Layers of much earlier construction, some of it dating back to the 3rd century BC, are visible in the brickwork at Nalanda.

HIUEN TSANG IN NALANDA

The great Chinese scholar-monk, Hiuen Tsang, travelled across forbidding deserts and mountains to come to Nalanda in the early 7th century AD. He spent 12 years both studying and teaching here, and was dazzled by Nalanda's "soaring domes and pinnacles, pearl-red pillars carved and ornamented, and richly adorned balustrades". On his return to China he settled down at the Big Goose Pagoda in Xian, where he translated into Chinese the Buddhist scriptures he had brought back with him from Nalanda.



Chinese print of Hiuen Tsang



Hot sulphur springs at Rajgir, surrounded by temples and rest houses

Rajgir ❽

Nalanda district. 115 kms (72 miles) SE of Patna. 👥 *33,700.* 🚆 🚌
ℹ *Bihar Tourism, Kund Market, (06119) 252 73.*

Surrounded by five holy hills, the picturesque little town of Rajgir is important for Buddhists as well as Jains. Both Buddha and Mahavira, founder of Jainism, spent many months meditating and preaching here. The hills around are dotted with Jain temples, the ruins of monasteries and meditation caves. Dominating Rajgir is the large new Japanese-built marble and sandstone **Vishwa Shanti Stupa** on Ratnagiri Hill, with its four gilded statues of the Buddha. Visitors can go up to the stupa by chairlift. From here, a path leads to the adjoining **Griddhakuta Hill** ("Vulture's Peak"), a site much venerated by Buddhists. Two rock-cut caves here were a favourite retreat of the Buddha, and it was on this hill that he preached two of his most famous sermons. The incident of the Buddha subduing a wild elephant, a scene often depicted in Buddhist art, also took place in Rajgir.

To the west of Griddhakuta Hill is **Vaibhava Hill**, at the foot of which are hot sulphur springs, crowded with people seeking a medicinal dip. On top of the hill are the seven **Saptaparni Caves** where the First Buddhist Council met soon after the Buddha's death to record his teachings. Below them on the hill is the **Pippala Watchtower**, a curious rock and stone structure, with cells for guards. It dates to the 5th century BC, when Rajgir was the capital of the Magadha Empire *(see p42)*, ruled by King Bimbisara who became a devotee of the Buddha. The remains of the great drystone cyclopean wall he built can still be seen on Rajgir's hills.

Environs

Pawapuri, 38 km (24 miles) east of Rajgir, is sacred to Jains as the place where the founder of their faith, Mahavira, died in 500 BC. A lotus-filled tank, with the marble Jalmandir Temple in the middle of it, marks the site of his cremation.

Gaya ❾

Gaya district. 100 km (62 miles) S of Patna. 👥 *383,200.* 🚆 🚌
ℹ *Bihar State Tourist Office, Railway Station, (0631) 232 155.*

Stretching along the banks of the Phalgu river, Gaya along with Varanasi and Allahabad, is regarded as one of the three most sacred sites for performing Hindu funeral rites. It is believed that Vishnu himself sanctified Gaya, decreeing that prayers for departed souls, performed here, would absolve all their earthly sins. Dominating the religious life of the city is the **Vishnupad Temple**, which is not open to non-Hindus, but no such restrictions apply to the picturesque ghats and shrines along the river front.

Environs

The **Barabar Caves**, cut deep into a granite hill, are 45 km (28 miles) north of Gaya, along a bumpy jeep road. They were the inspiration for the Marabar Caves in EM Forster's famous novel, *A Passage to India*. Dating to the 3rd century BC, these are the earliest examples of rock-cut caves in India. Of the four caves, built for ascetics on the orders of the Mauryan emperor Ashoka, the two most impressive are the **Lomas Rishi** and **Sudama Caves**. They are remarkable for the highly lustrous polish on the stone, and for the way in which the caves have been shaped to imitate the rounded wood and bamboo dwellings which were common at that time. Even the interior walls have perpendicular grooves cut into the stone, in imitation of bamboo strips. The façade of the Lomas Rishi Cave has fine lattice-work carving, and a charming row of elephants paying homage to stupas.

It is unsafe to explore this wild and rugged area without reliable guides, recommended by the Bihar Tourism office at Gaya's railway station.

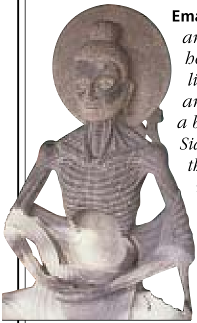
Rituals being performed at the Phalgu Ghat in Gaya

In the Buddha's Footsteps

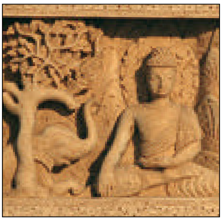
The Buddha was born in 566 BC as Siddhartha Gautama, prince of the kingdom of Kapilavastu. Though born in Lumbini, in Nepal, all the places associated with his life and his teachings are in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. These are now part of a well-travelled circuit for Buddhist pilgrims, who follow in the Buddha's footsteps from Bodh Gaya, where he attained enlightenment; to Sarnath where he preached his first sermon; through other places he visited regularly, and finally to Kushinagar, where he died in 486 BC.

The Buddha's footprints

Renouncing *his princely life, Prince Siddhartha (represented here by a riderless horse) left his palace and his family at the age of 30, to search for answers to the meaning of human existence and suffering.*



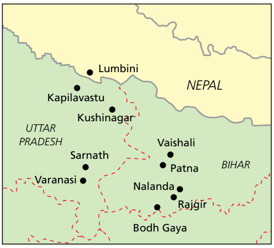
Emaciated *by fasts and penances while he spent six years living with ascetics and wandering as a beggar, Prince Siddhartha found that such self-mortification gave him no answers.*



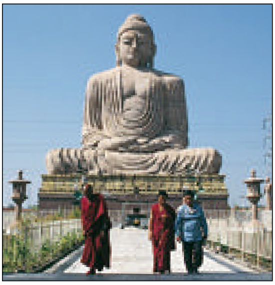
Enlightenment *came at Bodh Gaya where, after meditating for 49 days under the Bodhi Tree, he discovered that the cause of suffering is desire; and that desire can be conquered by following the "Eightfold Path" of Righteousness.*

The First Sermon, *delivered at Sarnath* (see p208), *contained the essence of his teachings. Eschewing asceticism, rituals, caste and class distinctions, his Eightfold Path prescribed Right Thought, Understanding, Speech, Action, Livelihood, Effort, Concentration and Contemplation.*

The Buddha's Death *took place in 486 BC. He fell ill after eating wild mushrooms prepared by one of his followers, and died in a grove of* sal *trees at Kushinagar, where a stupa marks the site of his cremation.*



BUDDHIST PILGRIM SITES



The Buddhist Trail *attracts Buddhists from all over the world, including countries such as Japan and Thailand. Many stupas and temples along the pilgrimage circuit owe their existence to these devotees. This Buddha image was built by the Japanese.*

See also the features on Little Tibet *(p123)* and Buddhist Iconography *(p141).*

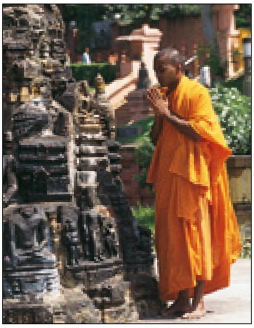
The Thai Monastery in Bodh Gaya, built like a traditional *wat* (temple)

Bodh Gaya ⑩

Gaya district. 115 km (71 miles) SE of Patna. 👥 *30,900.* 🚉 *Gaya, 13 km (8 miles) N of town centre, then taxi or bus.* 🚌 ℹ *Bihar Tourism, 34 Mahabodhi Market Complex, (0631) 240 0672.* *Monlam Chenmo Prayers (Jan/Feb), Buddha Jayanti (May).*

The holiest site for Buddhists from all over the world, Bodh Gaya is the place where the Buddha attained enlightenment. The focal point of the town is the **Mahabodhi Temple**, whose soaring pyramidal spire dominates the landscape. The temple is enclosed on three sides by a 1st-century BC stone railing, carved with lotus medallions and scenes from the Buddha's life, and includes the sacred **Bodhi Tree**, under which the Buddha meditated before he attained enlightenment.

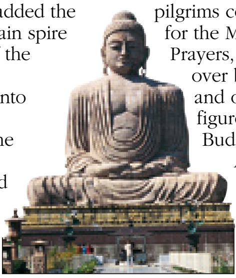
The original temple at this spot was a circular stupa, built by the Mauryan king Ashoka in the 3rd century BC, but a major reconstruction in the 7th century AD gave the temple its present form. In the 12th century, it was severely damaged by Muslim invaders, but faithfully restored in the 14th century by Burmese kings, who also added the replicas of the main spire at each corner of the temple. Then, as Buddhism went into near eclipse in northern India, the temple site was flooded and silted over, and effectively "lost" for centuries. Some Burmese Buddhists rediscovered it in the late 19th century. The temple ruins were then excavated and restored.



Beautifully carved stupas in the temple courtyard

Today, Bodh Gaya once again flourishes as an international centre for Buddhism. Temples and monasteries built by various countries, including China, Japan, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Thailand, Taiwan, Korea, Bhutan and Nepal, dot the town. The **Thai Temple** is the most picturesque, while the modern **Japanese Temple** is remarkable for the 25-m (82-ft) high Buddha statue that towers in front of it. The **Bhutanese** and **Tibetan Monasteries** are filled with colourful murals and prayer wheels, and both are always thronged by red-robed monks.

In the courtyard around the Mahabodhi Temple, monks meditate at the stupas, novitiates have their heads shaved, and pilgrims pray before the Bodhi Tree. For three weeks during the winter, a tented city springs up around the temple, as thousands of monks and pilgrims congregate here for the Monlam Chenmo Prayers, often presided over by the Dalai Lama and other venerated figures from the Buddhist world.



The 25-m (82-ft) Buddha statue, erected by the Japanese

Across the street, the **Archaeological Museum** has fragments of the beautiful original 3rd-century BC temple railing, and bronze and stone images from the 8th to 12th centuries, which were excavated during the restoration of the temple.

🏛 **Archaeological Museum**
○ *Sat–Thu.*

THE SACRED BODHI TREE

According to local lore, the original Bodhi Tree *(Ficus religiosa)* was cut down by Emperor Ashoka's wife because she was jealous of the time he spent at his Buddhist devotions. The emperor then revived the tree by nurturing its roots with gallons of milk, and built a protective stone railing around it. The tree that stands today is said to come from the same stock as the original tree. Ashoka's son Mahinda took a sapling from the original tree to Sri Lanka on one of his proselytizing missions. The tree flourished there, and its sapling was later brought back to be planted at Bodh Gaya after the original tree had died.

Pilgrims gathered around the Bodhi Tree

Bodh Gaya: Mahabodhi Temple

Lotus carving on the Chakramana

The Mahabodhi Temple complex, a UNESCO World Heritage monument, marks the site where, more than 2,500 years ago, Prince Siddhartha meditated on the causes of human suffering, found the answers he was seeking under the Bodhi Tree, and became the Buddha – the Enlightened One. The best time to visit the complex is at dusk, when thousands of oil lamps bathe the temple in a golden light, and the sound of Buddhist prayers fills the air.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

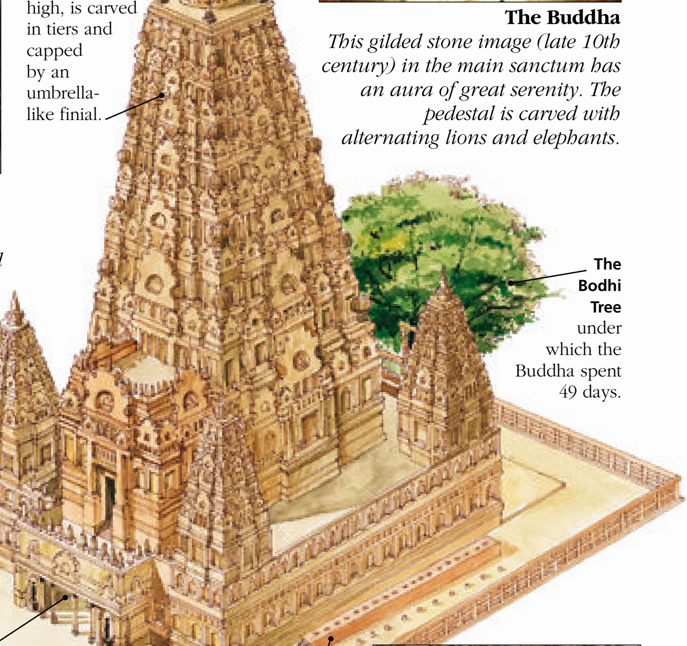
Mahabodhi Temple Complex. ℹ *Temple Office, (0631) 240 0445.* ○ *daily.* 📷 *extra charges.* ⚐ *Buddha Jayanti (May).*

The Buddha

This gilded stone image (late 10th century) in the main sanctum has an aura of great serenity. The pedestal is carved with alternating lions and elephants.

The Torana

The gateway to the temple is made of granite and covered with inscriptions from the Buddha's teachings. It dates from the 8th century.



The Spire, 54 m (177 ft) high, is carved in tiers and capped by an umbrella-like finial.

The Bodhi Tree under which the Buddha spent 49 days.

The entrance leads to the main sanctum with the Buddha image.

The Vajrashila

The red sandstone seat beneath the Bodhi Tree marks the spot where the Buddha sat. It probably dates to the 3rd century BC.

The Chakramana

Carved with lotuses, this sacred promenade was where the Buddha walked, meditating on whether to spread his message to the world.

Parasnath ⑪

Giridih district. 179 km (111 miles) NE of Ranchi. 🚆 🚌 *Madhuban.*

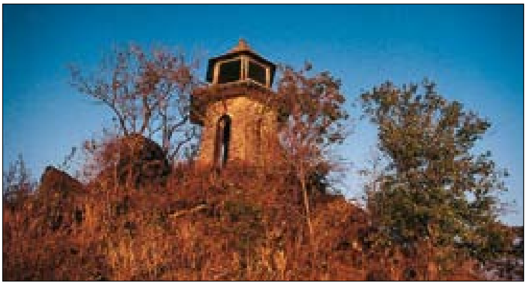
An important destination for Jain pilgrims, Parasnath is named after Parsvanatha, the 23rd Jain *tirthankara (see p396)*, who is believed to have attained nirvana here. Clustered on top of Sikayi Hill, the highest peak in Jharkhand at 1,400 m (4,593 ft), are 24 Jain temples, each one dedicated to one of the Jain *tirthankaras*. The temple on the highest point is dedicated to Parsvanatha. Pilgrims begin their climb from Madhuban, a stopover at the foot of the hill, and it takes over three hours, through forested slopes. Palanquins are available to carry those who do not want to walk. The views from the top are magnificent.

En route to Netarhat, through the picturesque Chhota Nagpur Plateau

Hazaribagh Wildlife Sanctuary ⑫

Hazaribagh district. 107 km (66 miles) N of Ranchi. 🚆 *Hazaribagh Rd Station, 67 km (42 miles) S of Pokharia, the main entry point, then bus.* 🚌 ℹ *Tourist Office, near bus stand, Hazaribagh town, located 16 km (10 miles) S of Pokharia. For permission contact Divisional Forest Officer, Hazaribagh, (06546) 22 3340.*

Set in the undulating Chhota Nagpur Plateau covered with tropical deciduous forests, this wildlife sanctuary is 16 km (10 miles) from Hazaribagh. Hazaribagh means "Thousand Tigers" and this quiet town's environs were once famous for their tiger population. However, as a result of deforestation, most of the tigers are gone, and spotting a tiger from one of the ten viewing platforms is now rare. The 190 sq-km (73 sq-mile) sanctuary, established in 1954, is bisected by the Ranchi-Kolkata Highway which, with its heavy traffic, has driven away many animals to other habitats. But there are plenty of wild boar, nilgai and leopard, and its thick forests are a haven for birdlife.



Watchtower in the Hazaribagh Wildlife Sanctuary

Palamau National Park ⑬

Palamau district. 170 km (106 miles) W of Ranchi. 🚆 *Daltonganj, 24 km (15 miles) NW of Betla, the main entry point.* 🚌 ℹ *Tourist Office, Betla, (06562) 25 6513. For permits contact the Deputy Director, Palamau National Park, Daltonganj. Jeeps are available at Betla.* 🐘

Also known as Betla National Park, Palamau National Park, on the northwestern edge of the Chhota Nagpur Plateau, is set in hilly tribal country, with the Koel and Burha rivers flowing through it. The park is dotted with bamboo, *sal (Shorea robusta)* groves, towering *mahua (Madhuca indica)* trees from whose pale yellow flower the area's tribal people (Oraons and Mundas) make a potent liquor, and grassland. The sanctuary is inhabited by wild elephants, deer, leopards, tigers (44 at last count in 1997) and several bird species. There are numerous watch-towers and hides that have been strategically placed around the water holes. The picturesque ruins of two 16th-century forts, hot springs and a few tribal villages also lie within the park.

Leopard at Palamau Park

Netarhat ⑭

Palamau district. 156 km (97 miles) W of Ranchi. 🚌

The only hill station in Bihar and Jharkhand, Netarhat is situated at an altitude of 1,140 m (3,740 ft) and lies deep within the forested Chhota Nagpur hills, just off the Ranchi-Hazaribagh Highway. There are several pleasant rambles in the hills around this little town, and fine views of the surrounding countryside from **Magnolia Point**. The scenic **Burhaga Falls** make an enchanting picnic spot. A curious building here is a huge wooden Swiss-style chalet, formerly the country retreat of the British governors of Bihar, and now a boarding school for boys. The school authorities usually welcome visitors.

For hotels and restaurants in this region see p697 and p726

Fields on the outskirts of Ranchi

Ranchi ⓯

Ranchi district. 289 kms (180 miles) E of Patna. 👥 *846,500.* ✈ *5 km (3 miles) S of town centre.* 🚆 🚌 ℹ *Birsa Vihar Tourist Complex, Main Rd, (0651) 230 1230.* ○ *daily.* 🎭 *Rath Yatra (Jun/Jul).*

The capital of the newly formed state of Jharkhand, Ranchi is a good base from which to explore the natural beauty of the Chhota Nagpur Plateau. The summer capital of Bihar in the days of the British Raj, Ranchi still attracts visitors keen to escape the heat and dust of Bihar's plains. The town's main attraction is the 17th-century **Jagannath Temple**, perched on a hill in the south-western outskirts. Like the Jagannath Temple at Puri *(see p313)*, this temple also holds an annual chariot festival.

The Chhota Nagpur Plateau is the home of the forest-dwelling Munda and Oraon tribes. The wide-ranging exhibits and collections of artifacts in the **Ranchi Museum** provide a comprehensive picture of their lifestyles and social structures.

🏛 **Ranchi Museum**
○ *Mon–Sat.* ● *public hols.*

Environs

Hundru Falls, 45 km (28 miles) east of Ranchi, is a picturesque picnic spot. This is the point where the Subarnarekha river drops down dramatically from the Chhota Nagpur Plateau to form a 100-m (328-ft) water-fall, which splashes into the pools below. The sleepy town of **McCluskiegunj**, 40 km (25 miles) northwest of Ranchi, is a quaint relic of the Raj. It was established as a settlement for Eurasians who felt they belonged neither to British nor to Indian society, and wanted a haven of their own. Today, only a handful of the original settlers remain (many have emigrated to Australia), living out their old age in cottages crammed with their treasured collections of English china ornaments, and adorned with pictures of the British royal family.

Jamshedpur ⓰

East Singbhum district. 130 kms (81 miles) SE of Ranchi. 👥 *570,300.* 🚆 ℹ *Tourist Information Centre, Bistupur, (0657) 243 2892.* 🚌 ○ *daily.* 🎭 *Founder's Day (Mar).*

One of India's major industrial centres, Jamshedpur is a rare oasis of cleanliness and efficiency in this region. The planned township, surrounded by lakes, rivers and the pretty Dolma Hills, was established in 1908 by the Parsi tycoon, Sir Jamshedji Tata *(see p446)*. He is regarded as the father of industrial development in India. The Tata Iron and Steel Company (TISCO) was set up by him in this area because of the rich deposits of iron ore and coal found here. The Tata empire continues to flourish, and several of its research, educational and cultural institutes here are open to visitors.

Oraon tribal girls dancing

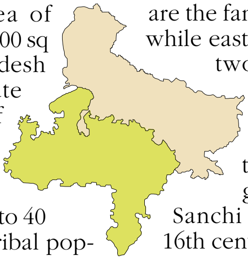
FESTIVALS OF BIHAR & JHARKHAND

Maner Urs *(Feb)*, Maner. This festival honours the Sufi saint Sheikh Yahya Maneri with soulful *qawwali* singing at his mausoleum, and a lively fair in the town.
Sarhool *(Mar/Apr)*, Jharkhand. The Munda tribals perform tree-worshipping ceremonies, followed by much dancing and feasting.
Jatra *(Mar/Apr)*, Jharkhand. The Oraon tribals hold lively dances during this festival, in which the young people choose their mates.
Buddha Jayanti *(May)*, Bodh Gaya. A fair and special prayers are held to celebrate the Buddha's birth, attainment of enlightenment and nirvana.

Pilgrims with offerings for the Sun God at Chhat

Batsavitri *(May/Jun)*. This festival commemorates the legend of Savitri, who brought her husband Satyavan back from the dead through the sheer intensity of her prayer. It is celebrated by married women who fast and pray, tie strings around banyan trees and offer sweets and fruits to images of Savitri.
Sonepur Mela *(Oct/Nov)*, Sonepur *(see p216)*.
Chhat *(Oct/Nov)*. Flower-shaped pastries called thekua are made in every home during this three-day thanksgiving festival, dedicated to the Sun God, celebrated all over Bihar.

MADHYA PRADESH & CHHATTISGARH



Covering a vast area of 443,406 sq km (171,200 sq miles), Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh constitute the geographic heart of India. Between them, they border on to seven states, have one-third of India's forest cover, and are home to 40 per cent of the country's tribal population. Madhya Pradesh is crossed by the Vindhya and the Satpura mountains, and its main river is the Narmada. In the state's rugged north are the famous Khajuraho temples, while eastern Madhya Pradesh has two of India's finest game sanctuaries, Bandhavgarh and Kanha. The scenic Malwa Plateau in the southwest has the great Buddhist stupa of Sanchi and the romantic 15th–16th century citadel of Mandu.

In November 2000, the thickly forested and remote southeast, with its predominantly tribal population, became the new state of Chhattisgarh.

SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

Towns & Cities

- Bhopal ⑨
- Chanderi ⑤
- Gwalior ①
- Gyaraspur ⑫
- Indore ⑬
- Jabalpur ⑲
- Mandla ⑳
- Shivpuri ④
- Khajuraho ⑥
- Mandu ⑮
- Orchha ③
- Sanchi ⑪

Historic Sites

- Ajaigarh ⑦
- Bhojpur ⑩

National Parks

- Bandhavgarh National Park ⑧
- Kanha National Park ㉑

Hill Stations

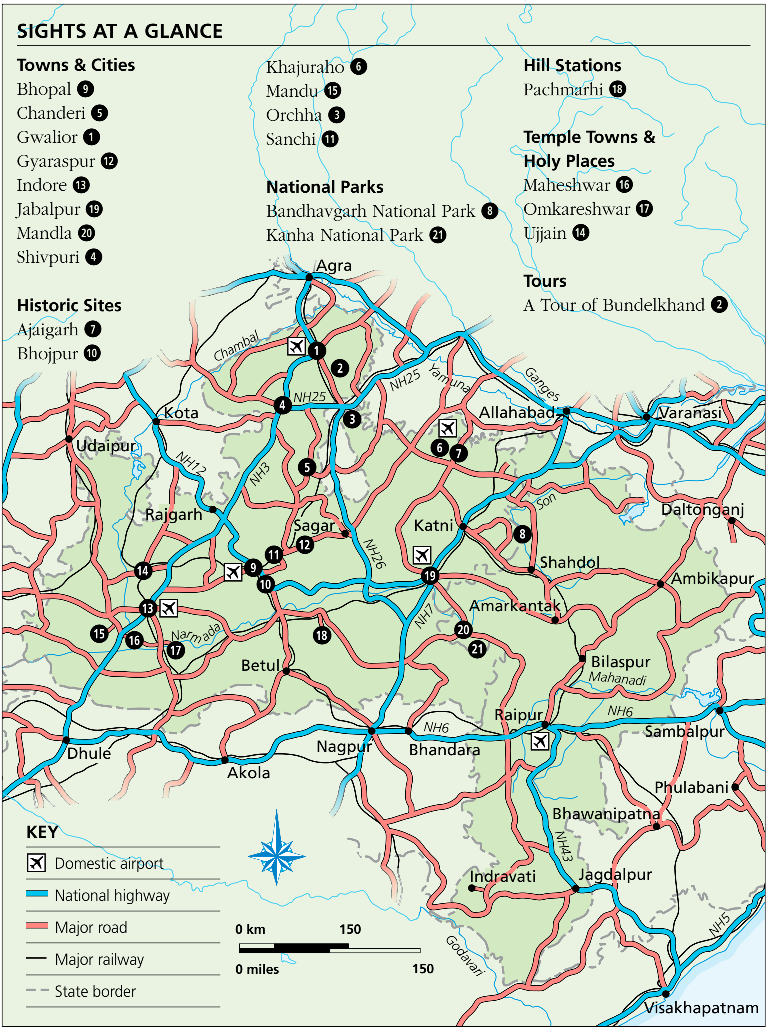
- Pachmarhi ⑱

Temple Towns & Holy Places

- Maheshwar ⑯
- Omkareshwar ⑰
- Ujjain ⑭

Tours

- A Tour of Bundelkhand ②


Agra
Chambal
1
2
NH25
Yamuna
Ganges
Allahabad
Varanasi
4
3
Kota
Udaipur
NH12
NH3
5
6
7
Son
Daltonganj
Rajgarh
Sagar
12
11
9
10
NH26
Katni
8
Shahdol
Ambikapur
14
13
19
Amarkantak
NH7
20
21
15
16
17
Narmada
18
Betul
Bilaspur
Mahanadi
Raipur
NH6
NH6
Sambalpur
Dhule
Akola
Nagpur
Bhandara
Phulabani
Bhawanipatna
NH43
Indravati
Jagdalpur
Godavari
NH5
Visakhapatnam
KEY
Domestic airport
National highway
Major road
Major railway
State border
0 km
150
0 miles
150

◁ **Sculptures of *apsaras* (celestial nymphs) inside the 10th-century Lakshman Temple at Khajuraho**

The Durbar Hall of Jai Vilas Palace with its two gigantic chandeliers

Gwalior ①

Gwalior district. 321 km (200 miles) S of Delhi. 👥 *827,000.* ✈ *14 km (8 miles) N of city centre.* 🚉 🚌 ℹ *TO Hotel Tansen, MG Rd (0751) 223 4557.* 🎭 *Tansen Music Festival (Oct/Nov).*

Apart from **Gwalior Fort**, the main attraction for visitors to Gwalior is the opulent, Italianate **Jai Vilas Palace**, south of the fort, built for the maharaja of Gwalior by his architect, Colonel Sir Michael Filose, in the late 19th century. Still the residence of the former Scindia rulers, part of the palace has been turned into a museum. The most magnificent room is the Durbar Hall. Hanging from its ceiling are two of the world's largest chandeliers, 13-m (43-ft) high and weighing 3 tonnes each. Before they were hung the strength of the roof was tested by having several elephants stand on it. Also on view is an extraordinary mechanical silver toy train that carried liqueurs around the maharaja's dining table.

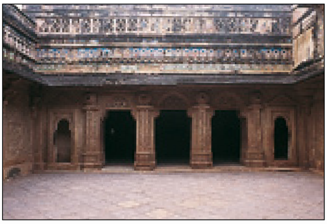
North of the fort is Gwalior's old town, which has two interesting Islamic monuments – the 16th-century **Tomb of Mohammed Ghaus**, a Mughal nobleman, which has outstanding stone latticework screens; and the **Tomb of Tansen**, the famous singer who was one of the "nine jewels„ of the Mughal emperor Akbar's court *(see p180).*

🏛 Jai Vilas Palace Museum
● *Wed.* ***Tel*** *(0751) 232 2390.* 📷

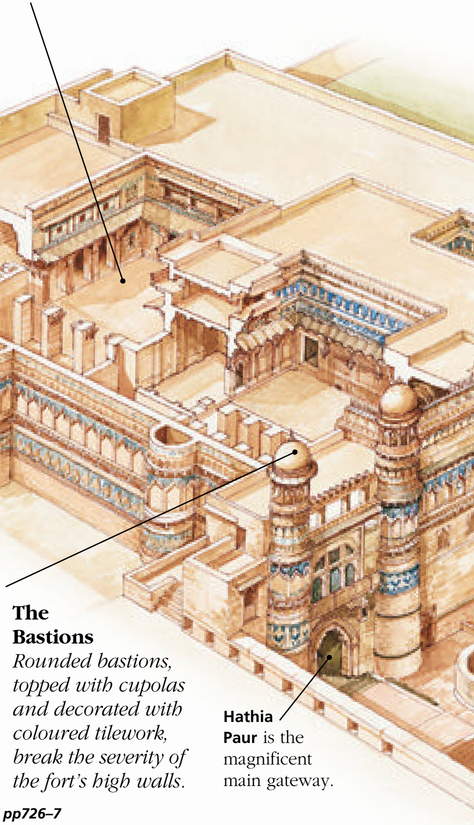
Gwalior Fort: Man Mandir Palace

Tile with parrots

The massive Gwalior fort stretches for nearly 3 km (2 miles) atop a 100-m (328-ft) high sandstone and basalt hill. Its formidable bastioned walls, 10-m (33-ft) high, enclose exquisite temples and palaces, the most spectacular of which is the Man Mandir Palace. Built between 1486 and 1516 by Raja Man Singh of the Tomar dynasty, this double-storeyed palace is regarded as one of the finest examples of Rajput secular architecture, embellished with superb stone carving and latticework. Brilliant blue, yellow and green tiles depicting parrots and peacocks, rows of ducks, elephants, banana trees and crocodiles holding lotus buds, decorate the Man Mandir's façade.



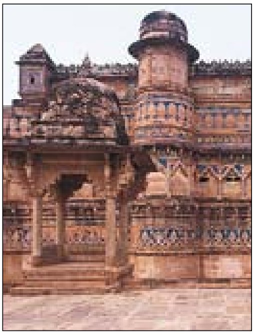
Courtyard
The interior courtyard with its carved pillars has rooms around it. Two subterranean floors, with fountains and baths, were later used as dungeons.



The Bastions
Rounded bastions, topped with cupolas and decorated with coloured tilework, break the severity of the fort's high walls.

Hathia Paur is the magnificent main gateway.

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp697–9 and pp726–7



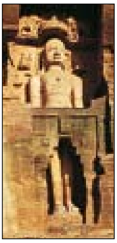
The lavishly carved and decorated south façade of Man Mandir

Stone Latticework

The oriel window, in the zenana quarters of the palace, is framed against intricately latticed stone battlements. A pair of caparisoned elephants flank the window.

Exploring Gwalior Fort

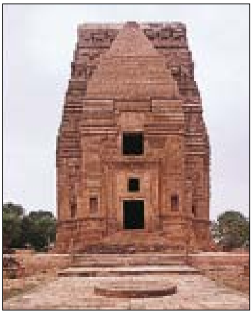
Described by a 16th-century Persian chronicler as “the pearl in the necklace of castles of Hind„ Gwalior Fort has had a turbulent history. Founded in the 8th century AD, it was successively ruled by a series of local Hindu dynasties, followed by the Delhi Sultans, the Mughals and finally the Maratha Scindias *(see p471)*, who became the maharajas of Gwalior in the 18th century. It was also briefly in British hands in the 19th century. The fort is best entered from the **Urwahi Gate** on its western side, where 21 colossal **Jain Sculptures** depicting the *tirthankaras (see p396)* and dating from the 7th to the 15th centuries, are carved into the rock face.



Rock-cut Jain sculpture

Lying to their left is the richly carved, 25-m (82-ft) high temple, **Teli ka Mandir**, the tallest temple in the fort. Built in the 9th century and dedicated to Vishnu, it has an unusual *shikhara*, rounded at the top. After the Indian Mutiny of 1857 *(see p53)* British soldiers occupied the temple and used it as a soda factory. Situated to its north are a pair of 11th-century Vishnu temples, called the **Saas-Bahu** (“Mother and Daughter-in-Law„) **Temples**. They are covered with superb sculptures of dancing girls and deities, though their *shikharas* were destroyed in an attack by Sultan Qutbuddin Aibak *(see p48)* in the 12th century.

North of them is the **Hathia Paur**, entrance gateway to the



The 9th-century Teli ka Mandir, the tallest temple in the fort

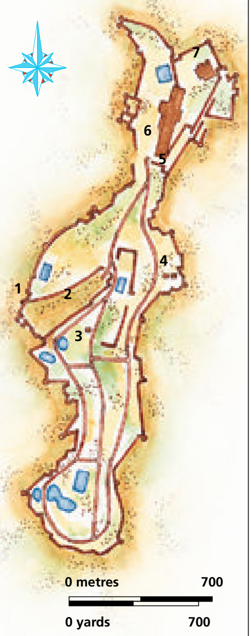
VISITORS’ CHECKLIST

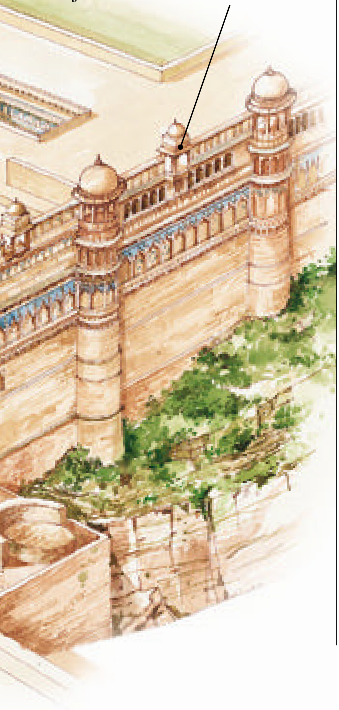
N of city centre. ○ *daily.* **Son et Lumière** *Apr–Sep: 8:30pm daily; Oct–Mar: 7:30pm daily.* **Archaeological Museum** ○ *10am–5pm Sun–Thu.* ● *Fri & public hols.*

Man Mandir Palace, its ornate pillars supporting a dome with a richly corbelled arch. At the northeastern edge of the fort is the 15th-century **Gujari Mahal**, built Raja Man Singh for his Gujar (tribal) queen. Now the **Archaeological Museum**, its fine collection of Jain and Hindu sculpture includes the celebrated statue of the *salabhanjika* (wood nymph), originally from the temple at Gyaraspur *(see p243)*.

GWALIOR FORT

1 Urwahi Gate
2 Jain Sculptures
3 Teli ka Mandir
4 Saas-Bahu Temples
5 Hathia Paur Gate
6 Man Mandir Palace
7 Gujari Mahal





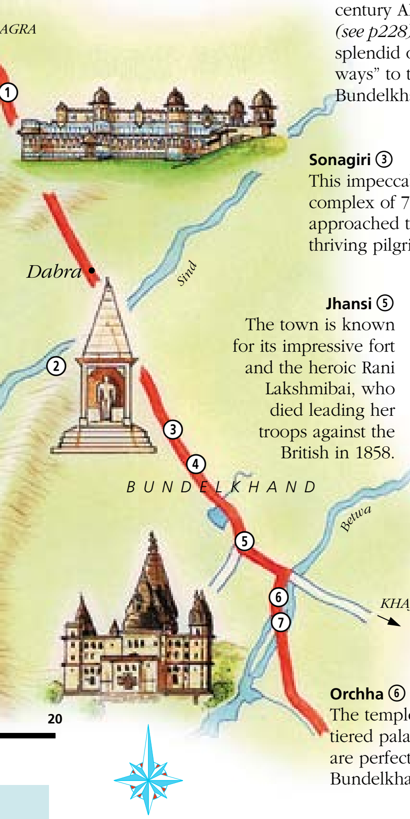
The strikingly ornamental façade of Gwalior Fort ▷

A Tour of Bundelkhand ❷

Gwalior and the adjoining region of Bundelkhand, named after the Bundela Rajputs, make up a culturally distinctive area in Central India. Countless forts and monuments, situated in a boulder-strewn landscape of great beauty, still echo with stories of the pageantry of the Bundela Rajput courts, and the valour of warriors such as the Rani of Jhansi *(see p195)*. The area's glorious history and refined artistic traditions are reflected in the architectural treasures of Gwalior, the medieval city of Orchha, and the hilltop temples of Sonagiri.

Gwalior ①
The capital of many dynasties since the 8th century AD, Gwalior *(see p228)* is the most splendid of the "gateways" to the Bundelkhand region.

Pawaya ②
The remains of an ancient fort can be seen in this capital of the Nag kings (3rd century AD) from the highway at Dabra.



Sonagiri ③
This impeccably maintained complex of 77 Jain temples is approached through a thriving pilgrim settlement.

Datia ④
This erstwhile Bundela capital surrounded by numerous small lakes, has scenically located palaces on hillocks.

Jhansi ⑤
The town is known for its impressive fort and the heroic Rani Lakshmibai, who died leading her troops against the British in 1858.

KEY

🟥 Tour route

= Other roads

▬ River

Orchha ⑥
The temples, cenotaphs and tiered palaces of Orchha are perfect examples of Bundelkhand architecture.

TIPS FOR DRIVERS

Length: *120 km (75 miles).*
Stopping-off points: *Gwalior, Sonagiri, Datia, Jhansi, Orchha and Taragram provide convenient stopovers. There is a petrol pump at Dabra, after Gwalior. State tourism hotels and guesthouses are available at Gwalior, Datia, Jhansi and Orchha. Local buses run between the major stops.*

Taragram ⑦
A fascinating handmade paper factory here is an interesting experimental centre aimed at upgrading local craftsmanship.

The marble cenotaph of Madhavrao Scindia at Shivpuri

Orchha ❸

See pp234–5.

Shivpuri ❹

Shivpuri district. 117 km (73 miles) SW of Gwalior. 👥 *146,900.* 🚆 🚌 ℹ *MP Tourism, Railway Station, (0751) 254 0777.*

The summer capital of the Scindia rulers of Gwalior, Shivpuri was once a thickly forested region, and a favourite hunting ground of the Mughals. Most of the elephants in Emperor Akbar's army were taken from these forests. Today, the main attractions are the 19th-century white marble cenotaphs of Madhavrao Scindia and his mother, which stand facing each other in a formal Mughal-style garden. With their mix of *shikharas* (spires), domes and cupolas, they epitomize Indo-Islamic architecture. Madhavrao's cenotaph is decorated with *pietra dura* work in lapis lazuli and onyx. There are life-size statues of the ruler and his mother and, in accordance with family tradition, their favourite foods are brought and left here every day. The colonial-style **Madhav Vilas Palace** has airy terraces overlooking the town. The 156-sq km (60 sq-mile) **Madhav National Park** is a mixed deciduous forest with an artificial lake, surrounded by grasslands. **George Castle**, a hunting lodge, was built by Jiyajirao Scindia in honour of King George V, who stayed here in 1911.

Chanderi ❺

Guna district. 227 km (141 miles) S of Gwalior. 👥 *28,300.* 🚌 ℹ *MP Tourism, Tanabana, (07547) 25 2222.*

The medieval town of Chanderi is dominated by the **Kirtidurga Fort**, perched 200 m (656 ft) above the Betwa river, and overlooking an artificial lake, Kirtisagar. Built by the Pratihara kings in the 10th century, Chanderi successively fell to the sultans of Delhi and Malwa, the Mughal emperor Babur and finally to the Marathas, becoming part of the Scindia kingdom of Gwalior. The entrance is through the Khuni Darwaza ("Bloody Gateway"), marking the point at which the Mughal emperor Babur broke through the 6-km (4-mile) long granite walls of the fort, when he conquered it in 1528. Cut into the adjacent rock face are several imposing Jain statues. Most of the structures inside the fort are attributed to Sultan Mahmud of Malwa, and are executed in the graceful provincial Afghan style that distinguishes the buildings of Mandu *(see pp247–9)*. The most ambitious edifice here is the **Koshak Mahal**, built in 1445. The sultan originally planned it as a seven-storeyed palace, but only managed to complete two storeys, each with balconies, rows of windows and beautifully vaulted ceilings. Other notable buildings are the domed and arcaded **Jami Masjid** and the **Badal Mahal** with its elegant gateway. Chanderi was once a flourishing centre of trade, and an exploration of the town reveals large sandstone *havelis*, shops raised on plinths and ruined caravanserais lining the winding lanes. The town is also famous for its gossamer muslin saris and brocades.

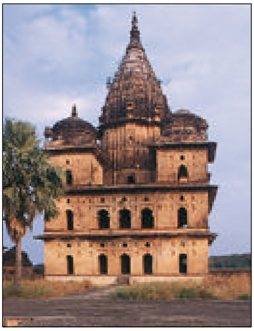
Minaret detail, Kirtidurga Fort

Environs

Deogarh Fort, the "Fortress of the Gods", is 25 km (16 miles) southeast of Chanderi. Within it are a splendid display of sculptures from a group of 9th- to 10th-century Jain temples. Just below the fort is the 5th-century Vishnu Dasavatara Temple with its fine sculpture and carved pillars topped by celestial musicians. A statue of Vishnu asleep on Ananta, the cosmic serpent *(see pp24–5)*, is among the early masterpieces of Indian art.

Chanderi's fort, the scene of many battles

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp697–9 and pp726–7



One of the *chhatris* (cenotaphs) of the Bundela kings at Orchha

Orchha ❸

Tikamgarh district. 120 km (75 miles) SE of Gwalior. 🚉 *Jhansi, 19 km (12 miles) NW of Orchha, then taxi or bus.* 🚌 ℹ *MP Tourism, Sheesh Mahal, (07680) 25 2624.* 🎪 *Ramnavami (Apr), Dussehra (Sep/Oct).*

Orchha is dramatically positioned on a rocky island, enclosed by a loop of the Betwa river. Founded in 1531, it was the capital of the Bundela kings until 1738, when it was abandoned in favour of Tikamgarh.

Crumbling palaces, pavilions, *hamams*, walls and gates, connected to the town with an impressive 14-arched causeway, are all that remain today. The three main palaces are massed symmetrically together. These are the **Raj Mahal** (1560), **Jahangiri Mahal** (1626) and **Rai Praveen Mahal** (mid-1670s), named after a royal paramour.

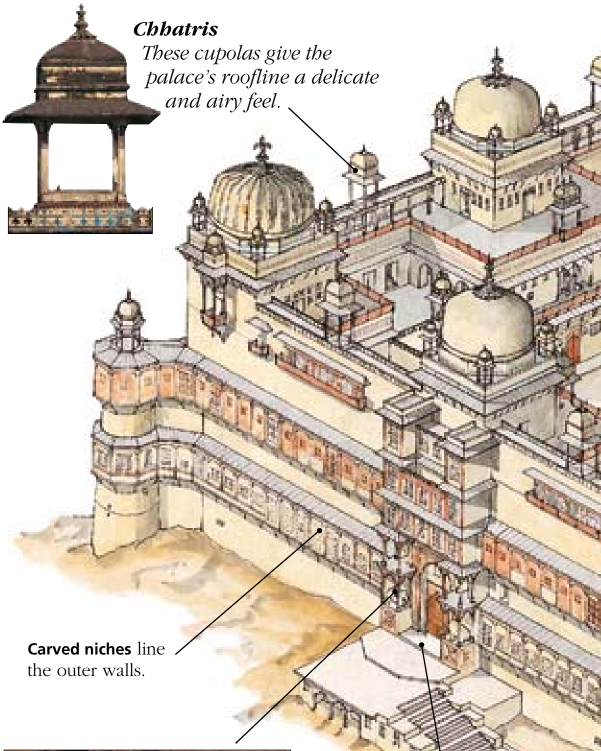
The old town is dominated by three beautiful temples – the **Ram Raja**, the **Lakshmi Narayan** and the **Chaturbhuj**. A unique blend of fort and temple styles, the Chaturbhuj Temple is dedicated to Vishnu and has huge arcaded halls for massed singing, and a soaring spire.

Lying along the Kanchana Ghat of the Betwa are the 14 hauntingly beautiful cenotaphs of the Orchha rulers. Along with the many *sati* pillars in Jahangiri Mahal's museum, these serve as reminders of Orchha's feudal past when queens sometimes committed *sati* by jumping into their husband's funeral pyres.

Orchha: Jahangiri Mahal

Flower motif in turquoise stone

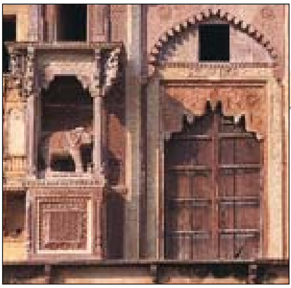
An excellent example of Rajput Bundela architecture, this palace was built by the Bundela king Bir Singh Deo and named after the Mughal emperor Jahangir who spent one night here. The many-layered palace has 132 chambers off and above the central courtyard and an almost equal number of subterranean rooms. The square sandstone palace is extravagantly embellished with lapis lazuli tiles, graceful *chhatris* and ornate *jali* screens. It also has a modest museum.



Chhatris
These cupolas give the palace's roofline a delicate and airy feel.

Carved niches line the outer walls.

Entrance



★ Entrance Gateway
The impressive entrance gateway, flanked by stone elephants, leads up to the central courtyard.

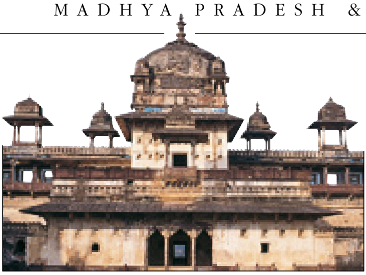
STAR FEATURES

- ★ Entrance Gateway
- ★ Domed Pavilion

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp697–9 and pp726–7

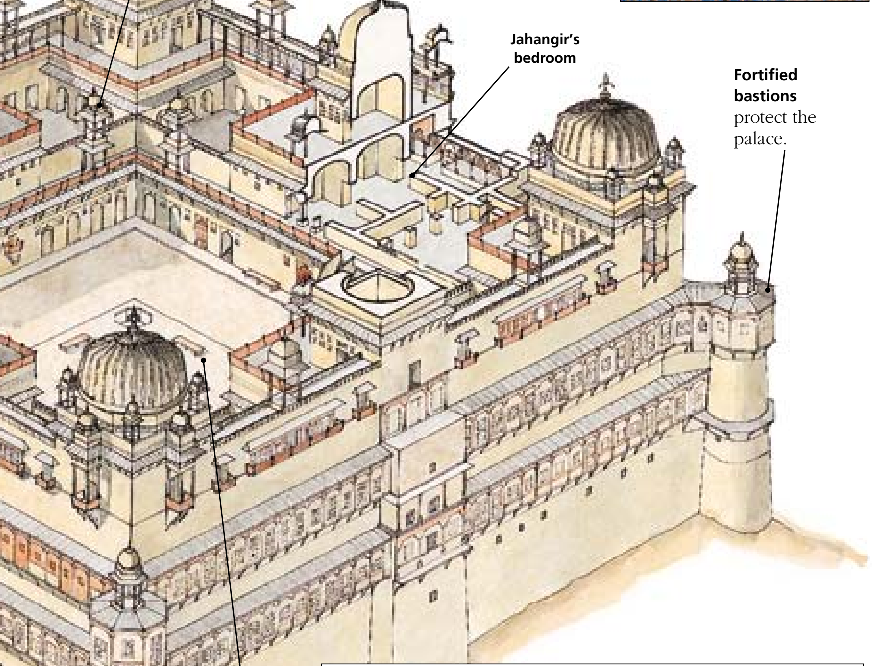
VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Palace Complex. ○ *daily.* ● *public hols.* ℹ *MP Tourism, Sheesh Mahal, (07680) 25 2624.* **Museum** ○ *daily.* ● *public hols.*



★ Domed Pavilion
A domed pavilion, with an apartment beneath, marks the corners as well as the middle of each side of the palace.

Glazed Tilework
Geometric lapis motifs decorate the outer façade at the top.



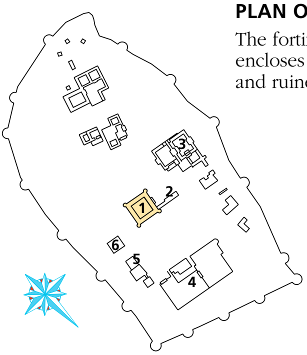
Jahangir's bedroom

Fortified bastions protect the palace.

The central courtyard can be viewed from each part of the palace and has a small museum in a set of rooms that run along it.

PLAN OF ORCHHA

The fortified town of Orchha encloses three major palaces and ruined ancillary structures.

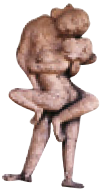


1 Jahangiri Mahal
2 Sheesh Mahal
3 Raj Mahal
4 Rai Praveen Mahal
5 *Hamam*
6 Stable

KEY

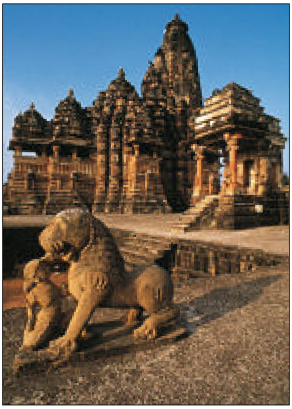
🟨 Illustrated area

Khajuraho: Kandariya Mahadev Temple ⑥

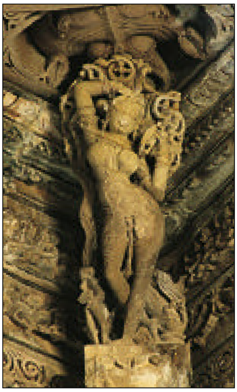


Amorous couple

The magnificent group of temples at Khajuraho, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, were built between the 9th and 10th centuries by the Chandela dynasty which dominated Central India at that time. The most impressive of the temples is the Kandariya Mahadev, which represents the pinnacle of North Indian temple art and architecture. It is remarkable for its grand dimensions, its complex yet perfectly harmonious composition, and its exquisite sculptural embellishment. Over 800 sculptures cover the temple, depicting gods and goddesses, beasts and warriors, sensuous maidens, dancers, musicians and, of course, the erotic scenes for which the Khajuraho temples are famous.

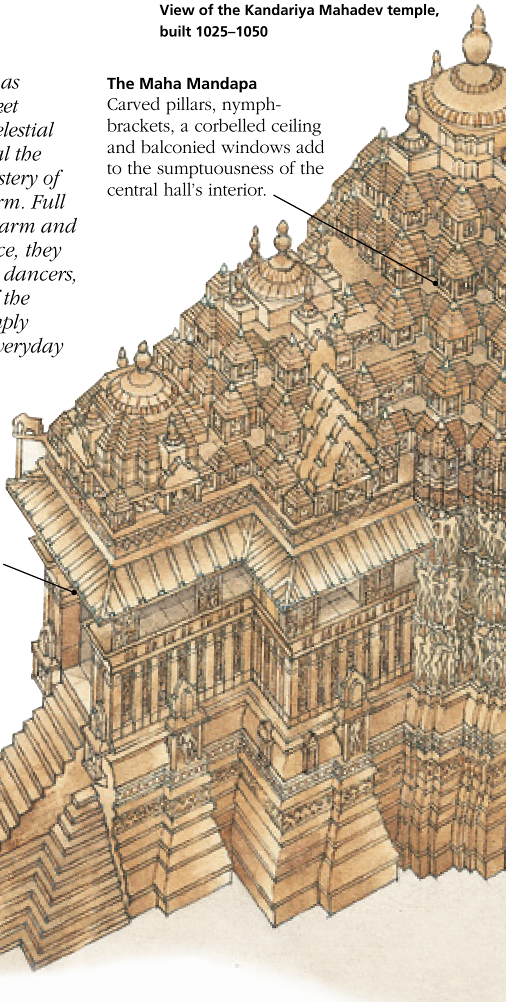


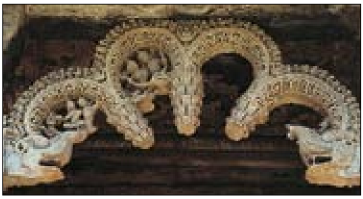
View of the Kandariya Mahadev temple, built 1025–1050



★ Apsaras
Often carved as support-bracket figures, the celestial nymphs reveal the sculptors' mastery of the female form. Full of natural charm and sensuous grace, they are shown as dancers, attendants of the deities, or simply engaged in everyday activities.

The Maha Mandapa
Carved pillars, nymph-brackets, a corbelled ceiling and balconied windows add to the sumptuousness of the central hall's interior.





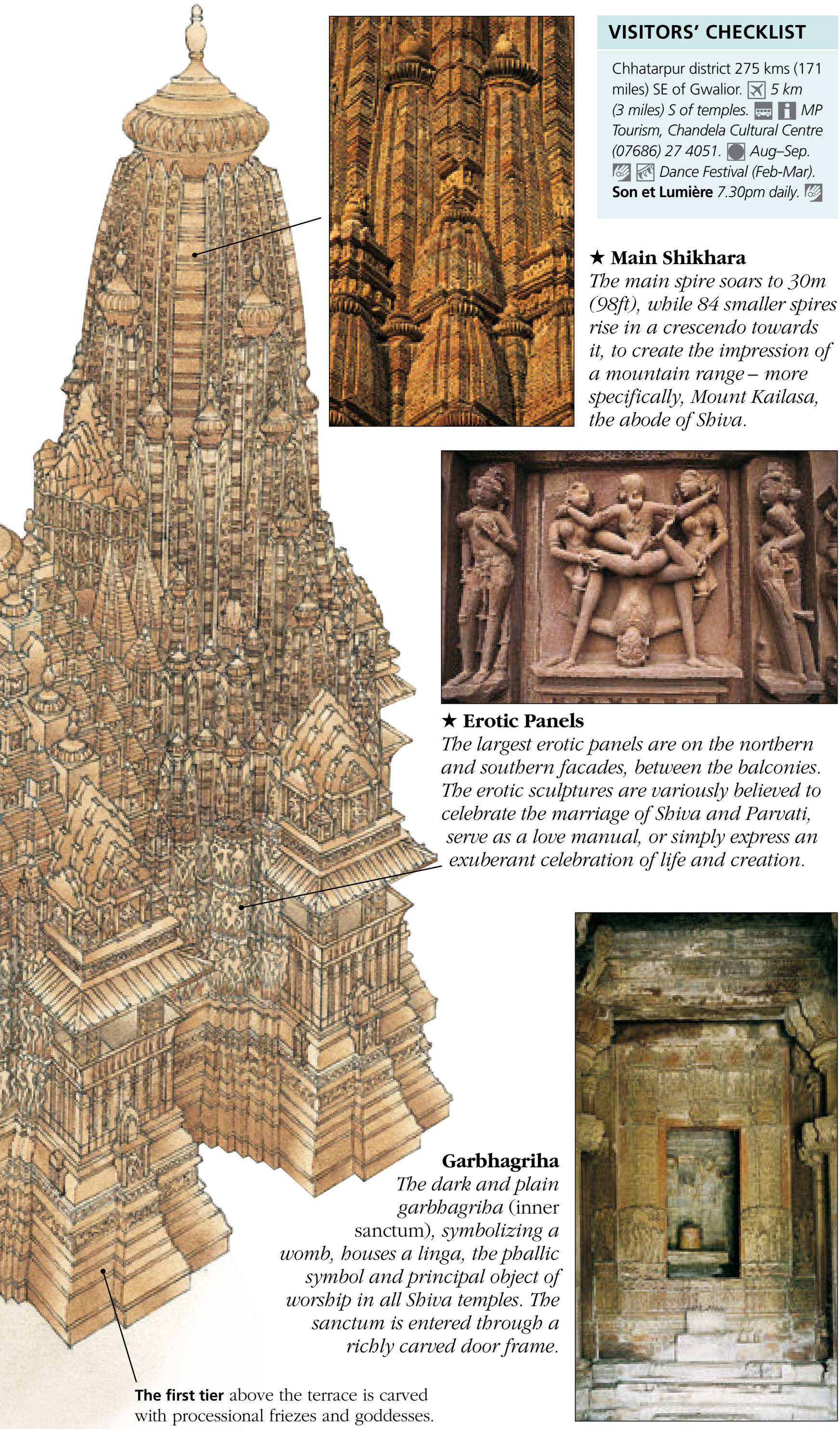
The Ardha Mandapa
The east-facing Ardha Mandapa (entrance porch) has an exquisite makara torana *(ceremonial arch) flanked by two crocodile heads, and covered with floral tracery.*

STAR FEATURES

- ★ Apsaras
- ★ Main Shikhara
- ★ Erotic Panels

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Chhatarpur district 275 kms (171 miles) SE of Gwalior. ✈ *5 km (3 miles) S of temples.* 🚌 ℹ *MP Tourism, Chandela Cultural Centre (07686) 27 4051.* ● *Aug–Sep.* 📷 🎭 *Dance Festival (Feb-Mar).* **Son et Lumière** *7.30pm daily.* 📷



★ Main Shikhara
The main spire soars to 30m (98ft), while 84 smaller spires rise in a crescendo towards it, to create the impression of a mountain range – more specifically, Mount Kailasa, the abode of Shiva.

★ Erotic Panels
The largest erotic panels are on the northern and southern facades, between the balconies. The erotic sculptures are variously believed to celebrate the marriage of Shiva and Parvati, serve as a love manual, or simply express an exuberant celebration of life and creation.

Garbhagriha
The dark and plain garbhagriha (inner sanctum), *symbolizing a womb, houses a linga, the phallic symbol and principal object of worship in all Shiva temples. The sanctum is entered through a richly carved door frame.*

The first tier above the terrace is carved with processional friezes and goddesses.

Exploring Khajuraho

The 25 temples at Khajuraho represent the brilliant burst of artistic flowering that took place under the generous patronage of the powerful Chandela rulers, who made Khajuraho their peacetime capital. The remoteness of the temples' location saved them from the ravages of Islamic raiders, but also led to their being abandoned after the decline of the Chandelas in the 13th century. Hidden in a dense forest for 700 years, they were "rediscovered" in 1838 by Captain TS Burt of the Bengal Engineers. According to local tradition there were originally 85 temples, and ongoing excavations have unearthed extensive ruins in the area.

The Khajuraho temples are divided into three groups. The most important are in the **Western Group** which, apart from the Kandariya Mahadev *(see pp236–7)*, includes the **Lakshman** and the **Vishwanath Temples**. Both are similar to the Kandariya Mahadev in composition, sculptural embellishments and themes, but they also have outstanding individual features.

The superb ceiling of the entrance porch and the female bracket figures inside the Lakshman Temple (built in AD 930) are worth special notice. The pair of street singers on the south façade are also remarkable, with their expressions of intense absorption. The master architect and his apprentices are exquisitely sculpted on the subsidiary shrine in the temple's eastern corner.

Opposite the Lakshman Temple is a pavilion with a magnificent statue of Varaha, the boar incarnation of Vishnu *(see p679)*, covered with carvings of several deities.

In the Vishwanath Temple, dating to AD 1002, the *apsara* plucking a thorn from her foot (on the south façade) is outstanding, as is the *apsara* playing the flute, which can be seen in the interior chamber.

The **Matangeshwar Temple** (built AD 900), with its plain circular interior, is the only one still in everyday use *(see p243)*.

The **Archaeological Museum**, near the entrance to the Western Group, has a fine collection of sculptures found in the area, including a dancing Ganesha, and a fascinating frieze showing the construction of the Khajuraho temples, with scenes of stone being cut and transported.

***Apsara* applying kohl**

A short distance away is the **Eastern Group** of temples. The Jain **Parsvanatha Temple**, built in AD 950, is the most remarkable, for the intricately carved ceiling pendants in its entrance porch. Three exquisite sculptures here show *apsaras* applying kohl around their eyes, painting their feet (both on the south façade), and fastening ankle bells (on the north façade).

The last phase of temple-building in Khajuraho is seen in the **Southern Group**. The **Chaturbhuj Temple** (built AD 1090) has a superb, four-armed image of Shiva in the inner sanctum. It is the only major temple in Khajuraho without any erotic sculptures.

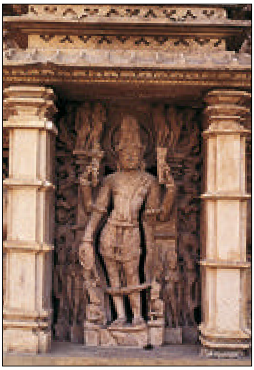
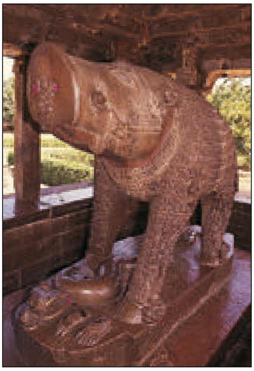


Image of Vishnu in the Lakshman Temple



The polished stone image of Varaha, Vishnu's boar incarnation

🏛 **Archaeological Museum**
○ *Sat–Thu.* ***Tel*** *(07686) 27 2320.*

Environs

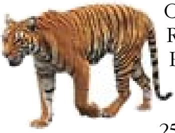
Raneh Falls, 17 km (11 miles) south of the town of Khajuraho, provide a cool retreat. The 19th-century **Rajagarh Palace**, 25 km (16 miles) southeast of Khajuraho, is in the same Bundela style as the palaces at Datia and Orchha *(see pp234–5)*. Situated 32 km (20 miles) southeast of Khajuraho, along the Ken river, the **Panna National Park**, has herds of deer, leopards, crocodiles and the scenic Pandav Falls. A favourite spot for tourists in the park is Gille's Tree House restaurant, perched 20 m (66 ft) above the ground.

Ajaigarh ❼

Panna district. 75 km (45 miles) E of Khajuraho. 🚌 ○ *daily.*

This great Chandela citadel, built in the 9th century AD and perched 500 m (1,640 ft) above the plains, is now a spectacular ruin. The steep path up to the top goes past gigantic sculptures carved into the sheer cliff face, including a particularly enchanting one of a cow and calf. Within the fort lie the ruins of once-magnificent palaces, broken fragments of statues, and several poignant *sati* pillars, marking the self-immolation of countless Rajput widows.

Bandhavgarh National Park ❽

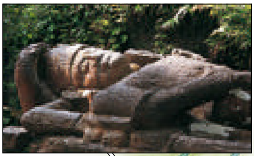


Indian tiger

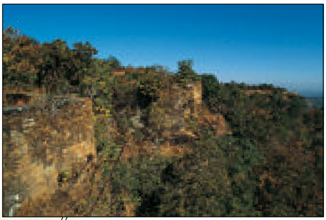
One of India's most important Tiger Reserves, the Bandhavgarh National Park sprawls across an area of 625 sq km (241 sq miles). Apart from some 50 tigers, the park's wildlife includes 250 species of birds, leopards, deer, jungle cats and packs of *dhole* (Indian wild dog). Great rocky hills, lush deciduous forests, marshes and meadows make Bandhavgarh one of India's most scenic areas. A picturesque hilltop fort with fine sculptures is part of the park's attractions.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

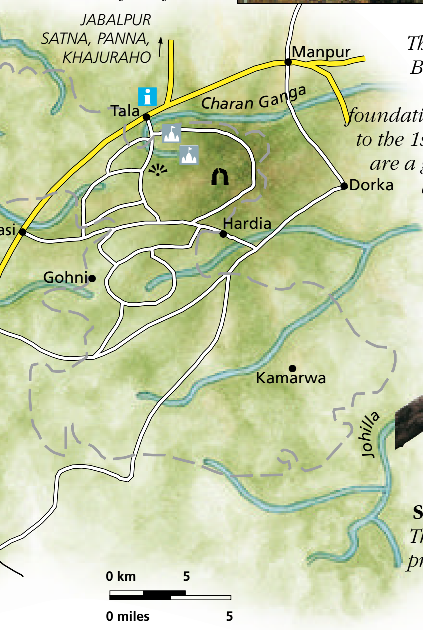
Shahdol district. 237 km (147 miles) SE of Khajuraho. 🚆 *Umaria, 33 km (21 miles) SW of Tala, the main entry point.* 🚌 ℹ *MP Tourism, White Tiger Lodge, Tala, (07653) 26 5308.* ○ *Oct–Jun.* 🖐 📷 *extra charges.* 🖐 🐘 *Jeep safaris available.*



Sheshasaya Statue
A 11-m (36-ft) long statue of the reclining Vishnu, guarded by a seven-headed snake, is at the base of the fort.



The Fort
The ramparts of Bandhavgarh's fort, whose foundations date back to the 1st century AD, are a good place for birdwatching.



Crested Serpent Eagle
This large eagle preys on snakes and lizards.

Dhole
The Indian wild dog has a distinctive whistling call, to assemble the pack. It has a red coat, large upright ears and a bushy tail.

KEY

- - Park boundary
═ Major road
─ Minor road
⛰ Temple
ℹ Tourist information
✺ Viewpoint
∩ Fort

THE WHITE TIGER OF REWA

In 1951, the maharaja of Rewa captured a white tiger in these forests. Named Mohan, he was mated in captivity with several tigresses, and all the white tigers in zoos across the world today are Mohan's descendants. A pair can be seen in the Bhopal zoo *(see p241)*. Since 1951, no other white tiger has been seen in the Bandhavgarh region. The white tiger is an "evolutionary colour aberration" and not an albino, nor a separate sub-species.

The white tiger, very rare in the wild

Bhopal ❾

Arch detail, Moti Masjid

The capital of Madhya Pradesh, Bhopal was founded in the 11th century by Raja Bhoj of the Paramara dynasty. By the 18th century, it was held by a Muslim dynasty whose rulers included several remarkable women, the Begums of Bhopal. The city, ringed by hills, stretches along the shores of two artificial lakes, the Upper and Lower Lakes. The old quarter, north of the Lakes, is a maze of narrow lanes, bazaars and mosques. To the south is the new city, with its leafy suburbs and industrial enclaves. In December 1984, a toxic gas leak from the Union Carbide factory claimed the lives of 5,000 people, in one of the world's worst industrial disasters. With the wounds of this tragedy now healing, Bhopal is a good base for visiting some of the state's fascinating sites.

Taj-ul-Masjid

Hamidia Rd. ○ *daily.* ● *to non-Muslims on Fri & on Muslim festivals.*

The most imposing monument in Bhopal, this large, pink-washed mosque was begun by Sultan Jehan Begum in 1878 but was left unfinished for almost a century before being completed in 1971. A progressive ruler, the begum established the city's postal system and hospitals, but virtually bankrupted the royal treasury as a result of her ambitious schemes. The enormous courtyard of the mosque has a *dukka* (water tank) for ritual ablutions, and the vast prayer hall is striking for its rows of pillars. This grandiose mosque is surmounted by three white domes and flanked by two 18-storeyed minarets. Its general ambience is majestic rather than beautiful.

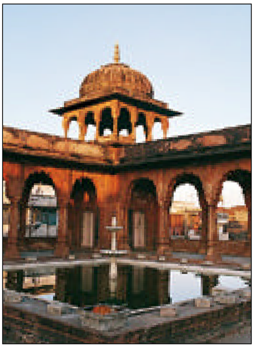
The Taj-ul-Masjid, Bhopal's most imposing monument

The Chowk

Bazaar ○ *Tue–Sun.* **Jami Masjid** ○ *daily.* ● *to non-Muslims on Fri & on Muslim festivals.*

Situated in the centre of the old quarter is the Chowk (literally, main square). Streets radiate out from it, each one specializing in a particular type of goods – the Bhopali *batuas* (elaborately beaded purses) for which Bhopal is famous, tussar silk, caps, drums and spices. *Havelis* line the streets, with wooden fronted shops on the ground floor, and elaborate wrought-iron balconies above. Dominating the area is the **Jami Masjid** with its gold finials, built in 1837 by Qudsia Begum, another of Bhopal's female rulers. It is surrounded by shops selling silver jewellery.

Bhopali *batua*



Fountain and tank inside the 19th-century Moti Masjid

South of the Chowk is another mosque, the **Moti Masjid** ("Pearl Mosque") built in 1860 by Qudsia Begum's daughter and successor. With its striped dome and tapering sandstone minarets, it looks like a smaller version of the Jami Masjid in Delhi *(see p86).*

Also worth visiting in this area is the **Shaukat Mahal**, a 19th-century Indo-Saracenic cum Rococo palace. Built by a French mercenary who claimed to be a descendant of the Bourbons, it now houses government offices, though visitors are usually allowed inside by the guards.

Bharat Bhavan

Shamla Hills. ***Tel*** *(0755) 266 0353.*
○ *Tue–Sun.* 📷 🍴

A large cultural complex, Bharat Bhavan was established in 1982 to showcase and promote India's rich tribal and folk art heritage. To the right of the entrance is the Tribal Art Gallery, a superb collection that includes votive objects, terracotta figures, masks, wall paintings, woodcarvings, and the distinctive metal sculptures created by craftsmen from Bastar *(see p253).* A gallery across the courtyard exhibits contemporary Indian art. Bharat Bhavan is also the venue for regular performances of theatre, music and dance in the evenings.

State Museum

Shamla Hills. ***Tel*** *(0755) 266 1856.*
○ *Tue–Sun.* 🛍 📷

A collection of 12th-century Jain bronzes, found in Dhar district in western Madhya Pradesh, form the highlight of this museum's collection. It

Replica of a tribal hut in the Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Bhopal district. 744 km (462 miles) S of Delhi. 👥 *1,433,900.* ✈ *11 km (7 miles) W of city centre.* 🚉 🚌 ℹ *MP Tourism, Paryatan Bhavan, Bhadbhada Rd (0755) 277 4340.* ⊖ *Tue–Sun.*

also has a series of striking stone sculptures, mostly from the 6th to 10th centuries. Older pieces include *yakshis* (female attendants) dating to 200 BC, and a Standing Buddha in black granite. The museum shop has good plaster replicas of some sculptures for sale.

🏛 Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya (Museum of Man)

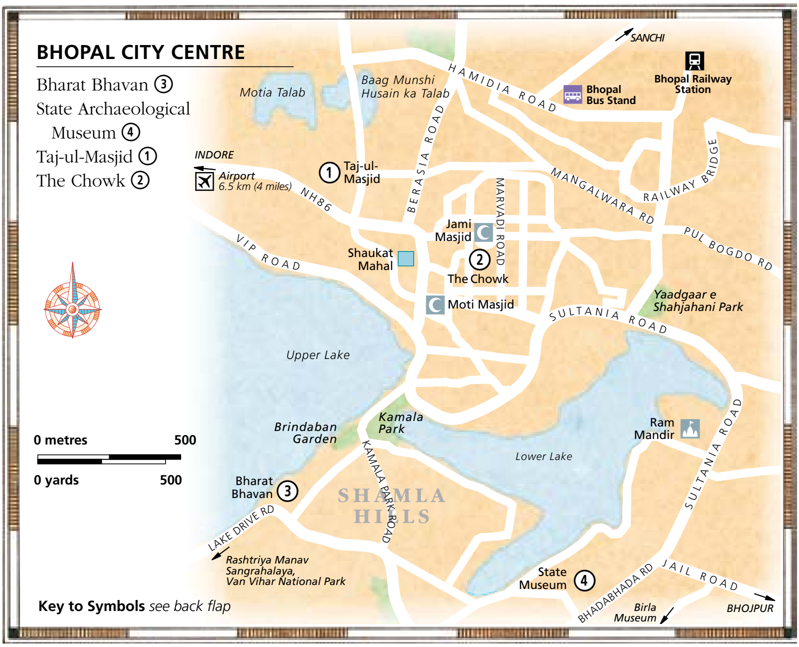
S of Shamla Hills. ○ *Tue–Sun.* 🛍
Set in the hills overlooking the Upper Lake, this museum, which sprawls over a 40-ha (99-acre) site, has authentic replicas of Indian tribal dwellings, built by the tribal people themselves. Tribal cultures from all over the country are represented in the museum, through comprehensive displays of utensils, ritual objects, musical instruments, tools, murals, carvings, jewellery and costumes. An Introductory Gallery, in a thatched hut, explains the museum's layout.

Van Vihar National Park

○ *Wed–Mon; 6am–10.30am, 3pm–5.30pm.* ♿
The most famous inhabitants of this large park, near the Upper Lake, are the white tigers *(see p239)*. A good time to see these rare creatures is at about 4pm, when they come to the edge of their enclosure for their evening meal. The zoo is also home to lions, leopards and Himalayan bears.

🏛 Birla Museum

Near Lakshmi Narayan Temple. ***Tel*** *(0755) 255 1388.* ○ *Thu–Tue.* ♿
This museum has a well-displayed collection of stone sculptures dating from the 7th to 12th centuries. Shiva, Vishnu and various goddesses are shown in their different incarnations. Particularly impressive are Vishnu in his boar (Varaha) incarnation, Goddess Durga in her ferocious Chamunda form, and Shiva and his consort Parvati in their celestial home on Mount Kailasa. Next to the museum is the large, recently-built and brightly painted Lakshmi Narayan Temple, overlooking the Lower Lake.


BHOPAL CITY CENTRE
Bharat Bhavan ③
State Archaeological Museum ④
Taj-ul-Masjid ①
The Chowk ②
0 metres 500
0 yards 500
Key to Symbols see back flap
SANCHI
Bhopal Railway Station
Bhopal Bus Stand
HAMIDIA ROAD
Motia Talab
Baag Munshi Husain ka Talab
BERASIA ROAD
INDORE
Airport 6.5 km (4 miles)
NH86
① Taj-ul-Masjid
MANGALWARA RD
RAILWAY BRIDGE
MARVADI ROAD
Jami Masjid
PUL BOGDO RD
VIP ROAD
Shaukat Mahal
② The Chowk
Moti Masjid
Yaadgaar e Shahjahani Park
SULTANIA ROAD
Upper Lake
Kamala Park
Brindaban Garden
Ram Mandir
Lower Lake
KAMALA PARK ROAD
Bharat Bhavan ③
SHAMLA HILLS
SULTANIA ROAD
LAKE DRIVE RD
Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, Van Vihar National Park
State Museum ④
JAIL ROAD
BHADABHADA RD
Birla Museum
BHOJPUR

Sculpture from the incomplete Bhojeshwar Temple, Bhojpur

Bhojpur ⑩

Bhopal district. 28 km (17 miles) SE of Bhopal. 🚌 ℹ *MP Tourism, Bhopal, (0755) 277 4340.*

Founded by the 11th-century Paramara king, Raja Bhoj, who also established Bhopal *(see p240)*, Bhojpur is dominated by the monumental, though incomplete **Bhojeshwar Temple**. Impressive sculptures cover parts of its unfinished corbelled ceiling and its entrance doorway.

Inside, on a tiered platform, is an enormous stone Shivalinga, 2.3-m (8-ft) high and 5.3 m (17 ft) in circumference. Etched on the paving stones and rocks in the forecourt, are the architect's detailed plans for the finished temple, while on the northeast side are the remains of a massive earthen ramp used to haul stone up to the roof.

Environs

The **Bhimbetka Caves** with their prehistoric paintings, dating back some 12,000 years, are about 17 km (11 miles) south of Bhojpur.

Sanchi ⑪

Raisen district. 46 km (29 miles) NE of Bhopal. 🚆 🚌 ℹ *Traveller's Lodge, (07482) 26 6723.* 🎪 *Chaityagiri Vihara Festival (Nov).*

The tranquil hill of Sanchi contains one of India's best preserved and most extensive Buddhist sites. From the 3rd century BC to the 7th century AD, this was a thriving Buddhist establishment of stupas and monasteries. The complex of buildings at Sanchi therefore show the development of Buddhist art across different periods, stretching over more than a 1,000 years.

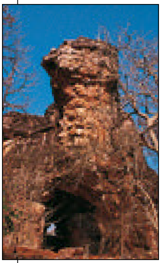
Founded by Emperor Ashoka *(see p42)* whose wife came from nearby Vidisha, Sanchi grew and prospered under subsequent dynasties, largely through the generous patronage of the rich merchants of Vidisha. By the 14th century, Buddhism was on the wane in India and Sanchi was deserted and half forgotten, until it was "rediscovered„ in 1818 by General Taylor of the Bengal Cavalry. Between 1912 and 1919 it was extensively restored by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) under Sir John Marshall. It was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1989. Most of Sanchi's buildings are within an enclosure at the top of the 91-m (299-ft) hill, dominated by the **Great Stupa** and its four superb gateways *(see pp244–5)*. Nearby, to its north, is the smaller **Stupa 3** (built 2nd century BC), with its single gateway, which contained the relics of two of the Buddha's closest disciples, Sariputra and Maudgalayana.

Also within the enclosure are several monasteries, which are located on the eastern, western and southern sides. Of these the 10th-century **Monastery 51** is the most interesting, with its courtyard surrounded by a colonnade, behind which are 22 monks' cells. **Temple 17**, on the eastern side, dates to the 5th century AD. A flat-roofed structure with columns surmounted by double-headed lions, this is the earliest well-preserved example of an Indian stone temple, and its style and features considerably influenced the later development of temple architecture.

Votive stupa with Buddha image

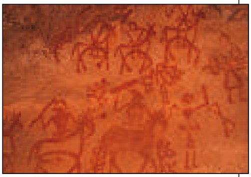
Located below the Great Stupa, just outside the enclosure, is **Stupa 2** (2nd century BC), whose railings are carved with lotus medallions and mythical beasts. Also depicted is a horse with stirrups. Near the South Gateway of the Great Stupa lies the broken shaft of an Ashokan Pillar, made of highly

THE BHIMBETKA CAVE PAINTINGS



Cave shelter at Bhimbetka

In 1957, the Indian archaeologist VS Wakanker discovered over 1,000 cave shelters in a rocky sandstone ridge near Bhimbetka village, surrounded by thick deciduous forest. More than 500 of these were covered with paintings done in bold, fluent lines, with the same power and energy as the cave paintings in Lascaux, France, or the Kalahari paintings in Africa. The earliest paintings, from the Upper Paleolithic period, are of large animals such as bison and rhino, done in red pigment, with humans drawn in green. The largest number of paintings are from the Mesolithic period (8000 to 5000 BC), and depict vignettes of daily life, hunting scenes and a range of animals including, curiously, a giraffe. Later caves (1st century AD) show battle scenes and Hindu deities. It was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2003.



Mesolithic period cave painting from Bhimbetka

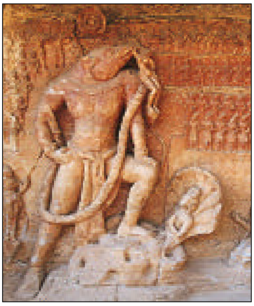
Stupa 3, which originally contained the relics of the Buddha's disciples

polished stone. It was used as a sugarcane press by a local landlord in the 19th century. Its four-headed lion capital, similar to the one at Sarnath *(see p208)* but not as fine, can now be seen in the Sanchi **Archaeological Museum**. Some other notable exhibits here include a pair of winged Mauryan lions, sculptural friezes from the gateways and statues of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas.

Environs

Besnagar, situated 10 km (6 miles) northeast of Sanchi, on the confluence of the Beas and Betwa rivers, was once a prosperous centre of trade. A unique relic of its past is the **Heliodorus Column**, with its fluted bell-shaped capital, dating to 113 BC. Dedicated to the god Vasudeva, it was erected by the envoy of the Greek king of Taxila (now in Pakistan), to commemorate his conversion to Hinduism.

Udayagiri, 20 km (12 miles) north of Sanchi, has fine examples of 5th-century AD rock-cut caves, carved into the hillside. Most notable is **Cave 5**, with its impressive sculpture of Varaha, the incarnation of Vishnu as a boar, rescuing the earth goddess from the churning ocean.



Sculpture of Varaha, Vishnu's boar incarnation, from Cave 5, Udayagiri

Raisen Fort straddles a hilltop 23 km (14 miles) southeast of Sanchi. Its 13th-century gates, palaces, temples and pavilions have lain in ruins ever since a devastating attack in the 16th century by the Sultan of Gujarat, but the site is still hauntingly atmospheric.

Udayapur, 70 km (42 miles) northeast of Sanchi, has the exquisite 11th-century red sandstone **Nilkanteshwar Temple**, dedicated to Shiva. It is comparable in scale and sculptural beauty to the Khajuraho temples *(see pp236–8)*. The symmetry of its graceful *shikhara*, rising in a crescendo of delicately carved stone, is broken by a curious figure that seems to dangle in space. According to local legend, this figure represents the architect, trying to climb to the heavens.

Gyaraspur ⑫

Vidisha district. 64 km (40 miles) NE of Bhopal. 🚌 ℹ *MP Tourism, Bhopal, (0755) 277 4340.*

The ornately carved 9th-century **Maladevi Temple** at Gyaraspur is built on a hillside. Partly carved out of a rock, it is now in ruins, and much of its superb sculpture has been pillaged. The exquisite statue of the *salabhanjika*, which is now the pride of the Archaeological Museum at Gwalior Fort *(see p229)*, was salvaged from here.

FESTIVALS OF MADHYA PRADESH & CHHATTISGARH

Shivratri *(Feb/Mar)*, Khajuraho. The celestial wedding of Shiva and Parvati is celebrated with colourful processions and an elaborate nightlong re-enactment of the wedding ritual in the Matangeshwar Temple.

Dance Festival *(Feb/Mar)*, Khajuraho. During this week-long festival, India's leading classical dancers perform in front of the Kandariya Mahadeva Temple. The postures and grace of the dancers are echoed in the exquisite stone sculptures of *apsaras* in the temple.

Classical dancer at Khajuraho Dance Festival

Dussehra *(Sep/Oct)* Chhattisgarh. This ten-day festival in honour of Rama is celebrated with great gaiety in the Bastar tribal heartland of Chhattisgarh. Along with lively dramatized episodes from the *Ramayana (see p27)* there are also colourful tribal fairs with dancing, cockfights and spirited bartering of goods.

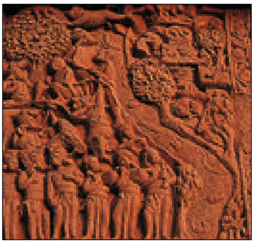
Chaityagiri Vihara Festival *(Nov)*, Sanchi. Buddhists from all over the subcontinent gather at Sanchi to view the relics of two of the Buddha's closest disciples.

Tansen Music Festival *(Nov/Dec)*, Gwalior. Named after the great musician Tansen, one of the “nine jewels„ at the court of Mughal emperor Akbar, this festival brings together the best classical musicians and singers from all over the country.

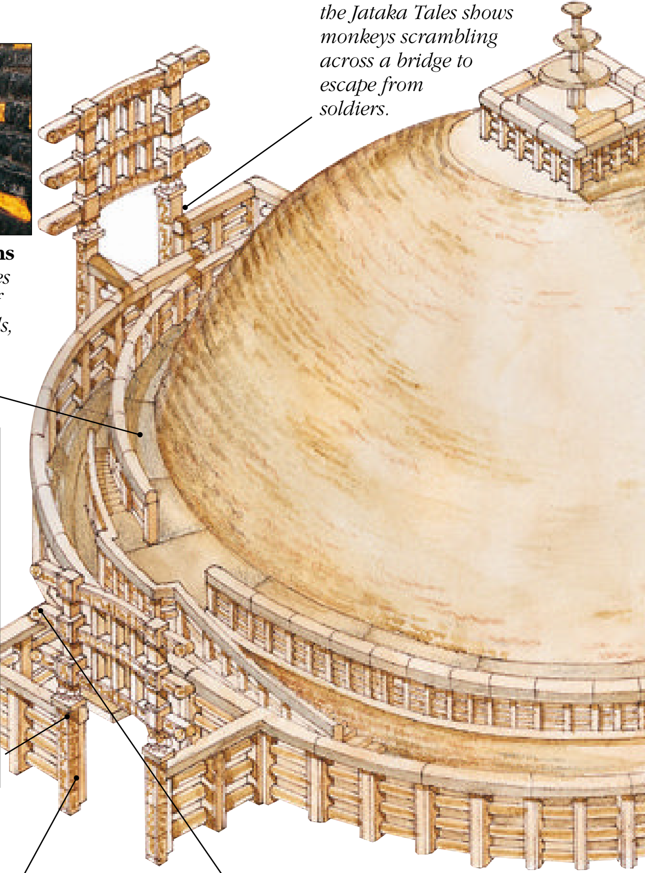
Sanchi: The Great Stupa

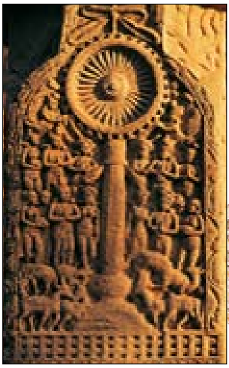
Animals on the *torana*

India's finest surviving Buddhist monument and World Heritage Site, the Great Stupa at Sanchi, was built in the 2nd century BC. Its hemispherical shape is variously believed to symbolize the upturned alms bowl of a Buddhist monk, or an umbrella of protection for followers of the Buddhist dharma. The stupa's main glory lies in its four stone *toranas* (gateways), added in the 1st century BC. Their sculptures replicate the techniques of wood and ivory carving, and cover a rich variety of Buddhist themes.

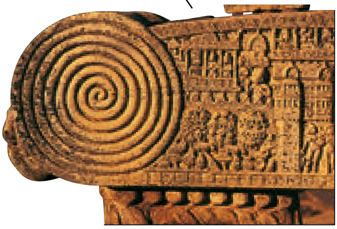

West Gateway
This animated scene from the Jataka Tales shows monkeys scrambling across a bridge to escape from soldiers.

Circumambulatory Paths
The paths have balustrades carved with medallions of flowers, birds and animals, and the names of donors who funded them.

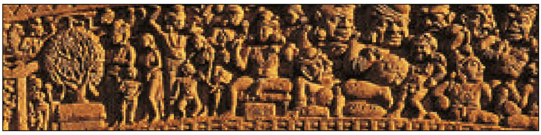



South Gateway
The Wheel of Law, being worshipped by devotees, symbolizes the Buddha.

The four gateways show scenes from the Buddha's life, and episodes from the Jataka Tales. The Buddha is not depicted in human form, but only through symbols such as a Bodhi Tree, footprints or a wheel.

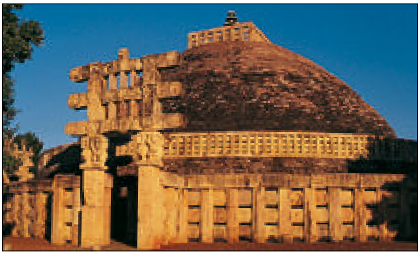

Detail of Architrave
The intricate carving on the architraves is believed to be the work of ivory and wood carvers.

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp697–9 and pp726–7

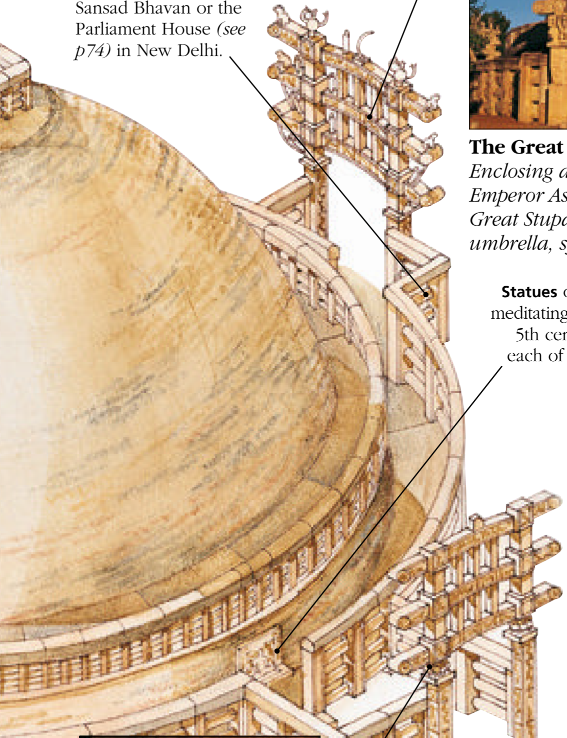


★ North Gateway
Sujata, the village chief's daughter, offers the Buddha (represented by the Bodhi Tree) kheer *(rice pudding), as the demon Mara sends the temptress to seduce him.*

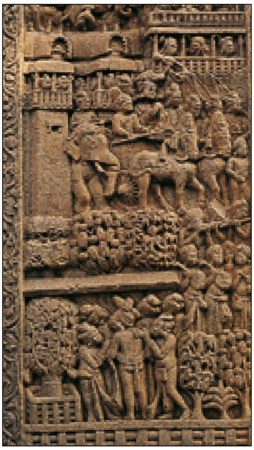
The *vedika* (railings) are an impressive recreation in stone of a typical wooden railing design. They were the inspiration for the stone railings around Sansad Bhavan or the Parliament House *(see p74)* in New Delhi.



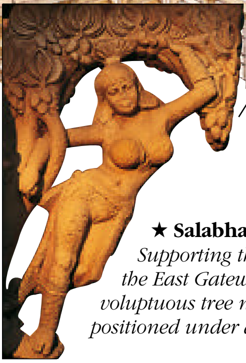
The Great Stupa and its West Gateway
Enclosing a smaller brick stupa built by Emperor Ashoka in the 3rd century BC, the Great Stupa is capped by a three-tiered stone umbrella, symbolizing the layers of heaven.



Statues of the Buddha meditating, added in the 5th century AD, face each of the gateways.



East Gateway
This scene shows a royal retinue at the palace of Kapilavastu, the Buddha's home before he renounced his princely life.



★ Salabhanjika
Supporting the lowest architrave of the East Gateway is this sensuous, voluptuous tree nymph, gracefully positioned under a mango tree.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

○ *daily.* 💰 🍴 **Archaeological Museum** ℹ *(07482) 26 6611.* ● *Fri. In acccordance with Buddhist tradition, walk around the stupa in a clockwise direction.*

STAR FEATURES

- ★ North Gateway
- ★ Salabhanjika

Indore ⓭

Indore district. 187 km (116 miles) W of Bhopal. 👥 *1,597,400.* ✈ *10 km (6 miles) W of town.* 🚆 🚌 ℹ *MP Tourism, behind Ravindra Natyagriha, (0731) 252 8653.* ⊖ *Mon–Sat.* 🎉 *Ganesha Chaturthi (Aug/Sep).*

The bustling commercial centre of Madhya Pradesh, Indore was a princely state until 1947, ruled by the Maratha Holkar dynasty.

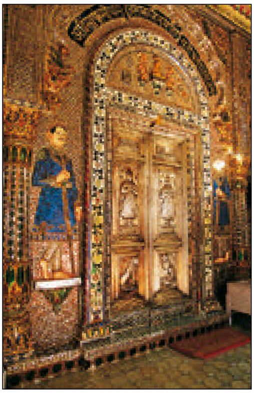
At the heart of the city, surrounded by a lively bazaar, is the **Rajwada Palace**, now just an imposing façade following a fire in 1984. A short walk west of it stands the **Kanch Mandir** ("Glass Temple"), an opulent 19th-century Jain temple, decorated with mirrors, chandeliers, and murals on glass.

On the southwestern edge of Indore is the opulent Lalbagh Palace, built by the rulers of Indore in the early 20th century. Now a museum called the **Nehru Centre**, its gilded Rococo interiors house galleries of miniature paintings, medieval coins and tribal artifacts. In the garden is a statue of Queen Victoria, looking distinctly unamused.

🏛 **Nehru Centre**
Lalbagh Palace. ***Tel*** *(0731) 247 3264.* ○ *Tue–Sun.* 📷

Environs

Dewas, 35 km (22 miles) northeast of Indore, was the setting for EM Forster's book. *The Hill of Devi* (1953).



The glittering interior of the Kanch Mandir in Indore

Sacred ghats on the Shipra river in Ujjain

Ujjain ⓮

Ujjain district. 56 km (35 miles) NW of Indore. 👥 *429,900.* 🚆 🚌 ℹ *MP Tourism, Railway Station, (0734) 396 9000.* 🎉 *Kumbh Mela (every 12 years), Shivratri (Feb/Mar).*

On the banks of the Shipra river, Ujjain is one of India's seven sacred cities, and one of the four sites of the Kumbh Mela *(see p210)*. In the 4th–5th centuries AD it was the second capital of the Gupta Empire *(see p43)*, with the celebrated Sanskrit poet Kalidasa as one of its leading lights. Its glory was, however, eclipsed in the 13th century after it was sacked by the Delhi Sultans *(see p48)*.

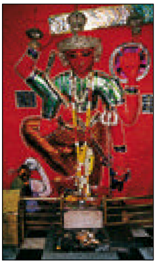
The focal point of the town is the **Mahakaleshwar Temple** (an 18th-century reconstruction on the site of the original), with its much-venerated Shivalinga. In the main square is the **Gopal Temple**, whose silver doors are believed to be from the Somnath Temple in Gujarat, ransacked by Mahmud of Ghazni in the 11th century. A similar pair of doors are at the Golden Temple in Amritsar *(see pp106–107)*. **Ram Ghat**, the largest of sacred ghats on the banks of the river, is the site of the Kumbh Mela (the next Ardh Kumbh here is due in 2010). On the opposite bank is the **Chintaman Ganesha Temple** whose carved pillars, dating to the 11th century, are the only relics of the original temple. At the southwestern edge of the city is the **Vedh Shala Observatory**. Built in 1730 by Sawai Jai Singh II of Jaipur, the Mughal-appointed governor of Malwa, it is a smaller version of the one at Jaipur *(see pp358–9)*.

Environs

The charming 15th-century **Kaliadeh Palace**, 8 km (5 miles) north of Ujjain, on an island in the Shipra, was built by the sultans of Malwa.

THE HILL OF DEVI

The famous British writer Edward Morgan Forster (1879–1970) spent several months in the princely state of Dewas as private secretary to its eccentric and charming maharaja. *The Hill of Devi,* based on his letters home, provides a delightful inside view of life at a provincial court with its festivities, intrigues and complicated protocol. Dewas is dominated by a hill with the temple of the goddess Chamunda Devi, hence the title of the book. Curiously, tiny Dewas was divided and ruled by two brothers, each with his own palace, army and anthem. Forster was at the court of the elder maharaja. The experience also provided Forster with material for his best-known novel, *A Passage to India (1924).*



Devi image in the temple at Dewas

Mandu ⓯

Dhar district. 105 km (65 miles) W of Indore. 🚌 ℹ *Tourist Cottages, (07292) 26 3235.*

Perched on a crest of the Vindhya Mountains is the deserted citadel of Mandu, one of India's most romantic and picturesque sites. Enclosed within its winding parapet walls, and surrounded by steep, wooded ravines, are palaces, mosques, lakes and pleasure pavilions, built between 1401 and 1529, by the sultans of Malwa *(see p49)*, who referred to it as Shadiabad, the "City of Joy". Mandu is spread over a 23-sq km (9-sq mile) area, but its major monuments are clustered in two groups – the Royal Enclave and the Village Group.

Royal Enclave

○ *daily.*

Dominating the Royal Enclave are the **Jahaz Mahal** *(see pp248–9)* and the majestic T-shaped **Hindola Mahal** ("Swinging Palace"), whose massive inward-sloping walls give the impression that the building is swaying. Built in the late 15th century as the royal assembly hall, its austere façade is lightened by delicate tracery work on its arched windows. Next to it is a well, the **Champa Baoli**, connected to a series of subterranean rooms cooled by flowing water, where the ladies of the harem spent hot summer days. To its east are **Gada Shah's House and Shop**, which belonged to an ambitious Rajput chieftain at the court of Mandu. The so-called "Shop" was actually an audience hall, while the house, a luxurious double-storeyed structure with water channels and fountains, still has traces of two fine paintings of the chieftain and his wife. The earliest of the monuments in the Royal Enclave is Dilawar Khan's Mosque, built by the first Malwa sultan in 1405, using the stones and pillars of Hindu and Jain temples that had stood here earlier.

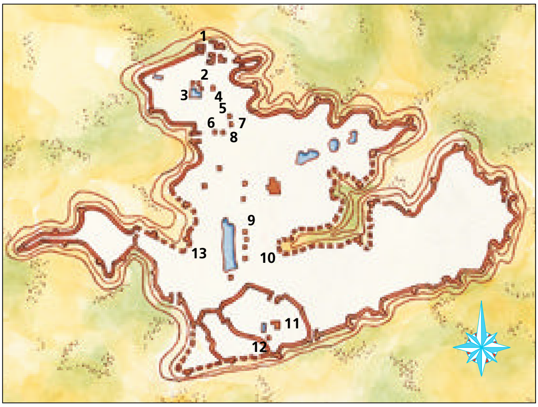
A row of lofty arches in the Hindola Mahal or Swinging Palace, Mandu

Detail from Hoshang Shah's tomb

Village Group

○ *daily.*

The first marble tomb to be built in India, **Hoshang Shah's Tomb** (1440) is a perfectly proportioned structure, where Malwa's most powerful sultan is buried. It has an inscription on the door recording the visit of four of Emperor Shah Jahan's architects in 1659. Opposite it is the magnificent **Jami Masjid** (built in 1454). It is said to have been inspired by the great Mosque at Damascus. Three large domes and 58 smaller ones surmount its colonnades, and the *mihrab* is decorated with beautiful calligraphy. Next to it is the **Ashrafi Mahal** *madrasa* with the ruins of a seven-storeyed Victory Tower, acclaimed in contemporary accounts as Mandu's finest structure. It was built by Sultan Mahmud in 1443, to mark his battle with the maharana of Mewar. Interestingly, the latter also built a Victory Tower at Chittorgarh *(see p402)* after the same battle.



PLAN OF MANDU

1	Delhi Gate
2	Hindola Mahal
3	Champa Baoli
4	Gada Shah's House
5	Jahaz Mahal
6	Hoshang Shah's Tomb
7	Ashrafi Mahal
8	Jami Masjid
9	Malik Mugith's Mosque
10	Dai ka Mahal
11	Baz Bahadur's Palace
12	Rupmati's Pavilion
13	Neelkanth Mahal

0 metres 800

0 yards 800

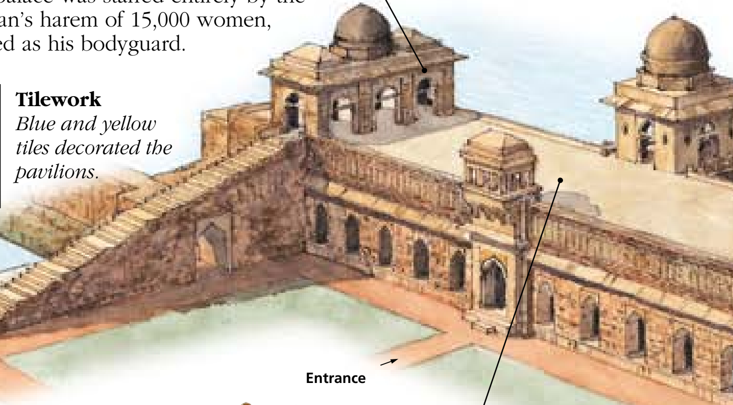
Mandu: Jahaz Mahal

A pavilion window

The Jahaz Mahal ("Ship Palace") was built by the fifth sultan of Malwa, Ghiyasuddin (r.1469–1500). Lying on a long, narrow strip of land between two of the many man-made lakes, Munja Talao and Kapur Talao, the palace gives the impression of an anchored ship, especially during the monsoon when the lakes are full. This pleasure palace was staffed entirely by the hedonistic sultan's harem of 15,000 women, who also served as his bodyguard.

The Pavilions
The juxtaposition of conical and domed roofs over the pavilions adds great charm to the Jahaz Mahal's silhouette.

Tilework
Blue and yellow tiles decorated the pavilions.



STAR FEATURES

- ★ Water Channels
- ★ Bathing Pool

The Terrace
The most spacious part of the palace, the terrace, with its pavilions and kiosks, overlooks the lakes.

Exploring Mandu

Between the Village Group of monuments and Sagar Talao, Mandu's largest lake, are several monuments worth visiting. **Malik Mugith's Mosque**, built in 1432, has carved pillars taken from ruined Hindu temples. To its south are two impressive buildings in a pretty, wooded area – **Dai ki Chhoti Bahen ka Mahal** (the "Nurse's Younger Sister's Palace") and **Dai ka Mahal** (the "Nurse's Palace"). The two women were clearly royal favourites and the pretty, octagonal-domed houses show traces of blue and yellow tilework.

Southeast of Sagar Talao, down a winding road to the edge of a cliff, are the Rewa Kund Group of Monuments, associated with the legendary romance between Sultan Baz Bahadur and the beautiful singer Rupmati. Beside the Rewa Kund Stepwell, fed by an underground stream whose waters are said to be sacred, is **Baz Bahadur's Palace**, constructed between 1508 and 1509. Its most charming feature is an octagonal pavilion overlooking a garden, now covered with weeds.

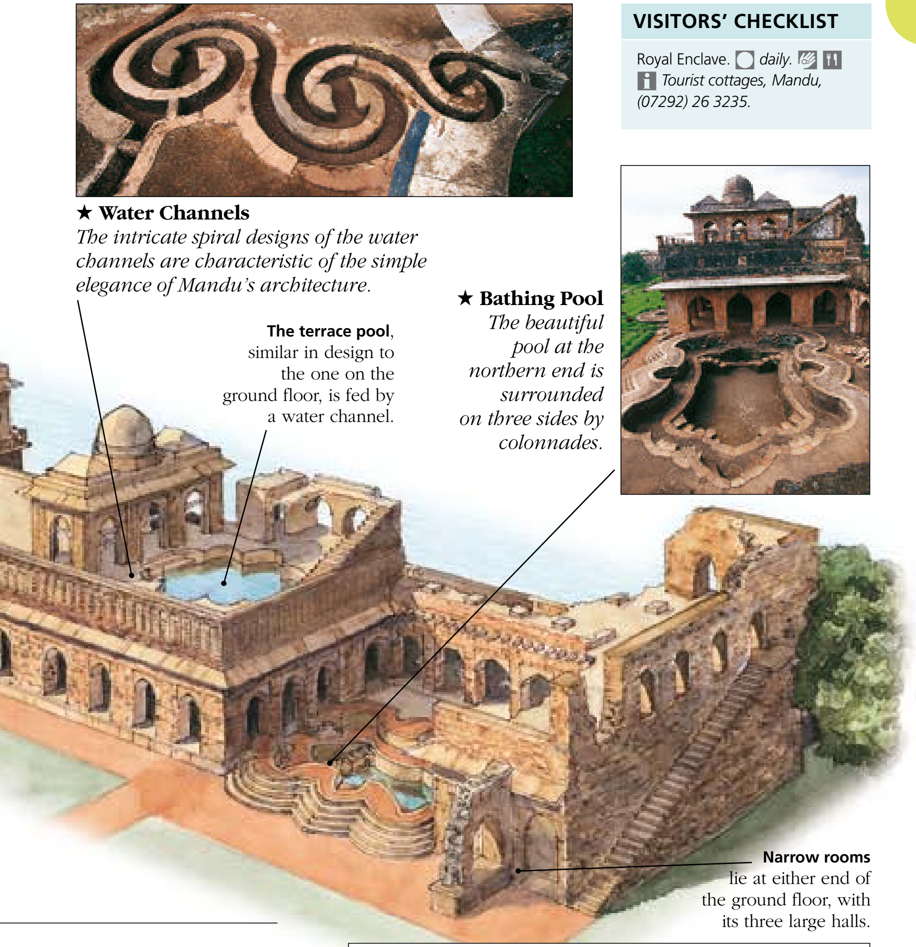
Shivalinga at Neelkanth Mahal

Located just south of the palace is **Rupmati's Pavilion**, with its lovely fluted domes, from where there is a spectacular view of the surrounding countryside.

Baz Bahadur, the last sultan of Malwa, was defeated in battle by the Mughals in 1561. After this, Mandu fell into decline, as the Mughal emperors only used it as a halting place on their journeys to the Deccan. In 1616, Mandu briefly came to life again, when the Mughal emperor Jahangir spent seven months here, renovating the palaces and giving lavish parties at the Jahaz Mahal. Accompanying him was Sir Thomas Roe, the Elizabethan ambassador to the Mughal court. He has left a fascinating account of royal festivities and exciting lion and tiger hunts at Mandu.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Royal Enclave. ○ *daily.* 📷 🍴
ℹ *Tourist cottages, Mandu, (07292) 26 3235.*



★ Water Channels
The intricate spiral designs of the water channels are characteristic of the simple elegance of Mandu's architecture.

The terrace pool, similar in design to the one on the ground floor, is fed by a water channel.

★ Bathing Pool
The beautiful pool at the northern end is surrounded on three sides by colonnades.

Narrow rooms lie at either end of the ground floor, with its three large halls.

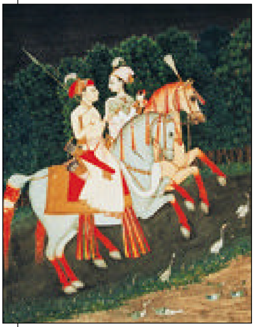
A short distance west of Sagar Talao, a flight of steps leads down a ravine to **Neelkanth Mahal**. This palace, with its many water channels and cascades, was built in 1574 on the site of an ancient Shiva shrine, for the Mughal emperor Akbar's Hindu wife. The main room, overlooking the valley, is once again in use as a Shiva temple, even though its walls are covered with fine Arabic calligraphy.

Environs

The **Bagh Caves**, lying 50 km (31 miles) west of Mandu, date from AD 400–700. Built by Buddhist monks, they have murals similar in style to those at Ajanta *(see pp480–81)*, but unfortunately these are in a very poor state of preservation.

BAZ BAHADUR AND RUPMATI

One day while out hunting, Sultan Baz Bahadur (r.1554–61) spotted a Hindu girl, Rupmati, singing as she bathed in the Narmada river. Bewitched by her beauty and her voice, Baz Bahadur persuaded her to live with him in Mandu. Thereafter, he spent his time in the pursuit of love and music, leaving his kingdom vulnerable to attack. When Emperor Akbar's general, Adham Khan, attacked Mandu in 1561, he won an easy victory. Baz Bahadur fled the battlefield, deserting Rupmati who was captured. But the courtesan proved more courageous than the king. Even as the Mughal general waited outside her room to claim her, she committed suicide by swallowing poison.



An 18th-century miniature of Rupmati and Baz Bahadur

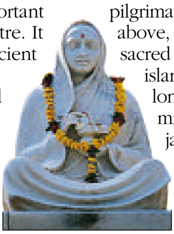
View of Maheshwar's fort, shrines and ghats, along the Narmada

Maheshwar ⑯

West Nimar district. 90 km (56 miles) SW of Indore. 👥 *19,600.* 🚉 *Barwaha, 39 km (24 miles) E of town centre, then taxi or bus.* 🚌 ℹ *MP Tourism, Narmada Cottages, (07283) 27 3455.* 🎉 *Panchkosi Yatra (Mar).*

Picturesquely sited on the banks of the Narmada, Maheshwar is an important Hindu pilgrimage centre. It was the site of the ancient city of Mahishmati, mentioned in classical Sanskrit texts. Maheshwar's beautiful temples and ghats were erected by Queen Ahilyabai of the Holkar dynasty *(see p246)*, in the mid-18th century.

The 1.5-km (1-mile) long river front is dotted with shrines, ghats and the elegant cenotaphs of the Holkar rulers, and is usually thronged with pilgrims taking a dip. A magnificent fan-shaped stairway leads from the river front to Maheshwar Fort's royal enclosure, and the **Ahilyeshwar Temple**, built in 1798. The richly carved courtyard, leading on to the palace, has an impressive statue of Ahilyabai. This benevolent queen, who also built the Vishwanath Temple *(see p205)* in Varanasi, was described by a British colonial official, Sir John Malcolm, as "one of the purest and most exemplary rulers that ever lived". Also within the fort is the Rehwa Weavers' Society, where the famous gossamer-fine Maheshwari cotton and silk textiles are woven.



Statue of Queen Ahilyabai

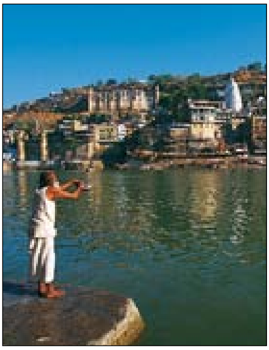
Omkareshwar ⑰

East Nimar district. 77 km (48 miles) S of Indore. 🚉 🚌 ⛴ ℹ *MP Tourism, Tourist Bungalow, (07280) 27 1455.* 🎉 *Shivratri (Feb/Mar).*

The island of Omkareshwar, at the confluence of the Narmada and Kaveri rivers, is one of India's most enchanting pilgrimage towns. Seen from above, it is shaped like the sacred *Om* symbol. The island is 2-km (1.3-mile) long and 1-km (0.6-mile) wide, with jagged cliffs on its southern and eastern sides. It is dotted with temples, sadhus' caves and bathing ghats, and filled with the sound of chanting. A circumambulatory path circles the island, marking out the pilgrim trail.

Omkareshwar is linked to the mainland by a concrete causeway, though visitors can also come on the flat bottomed barges that ply the river. The island is dominated by the towering white *shikhara* of the **Sri Omkar Mandhata** ("Bestower of Desires") **Temple**, within which is a particularly sacred Shivalinga, one of 12 *jyotirlingas* (natural rock lingas said to have miraculously emerged from light) in the country.

At the eastern end of the island is the 10th-century **Siddhnath Temple** which has beautiful sculptures of *apsaras*. The northern end has a cluster of Hindu and Jain temples. Overlooking them is a ruined palace, part of a fortified township that stood here until it was sacked by Muslim invaders in the 11th century.



A pilgrim praying on the banks of the Narmada at Omkareshwar

THE NARMADA DAM CONTROVERSY

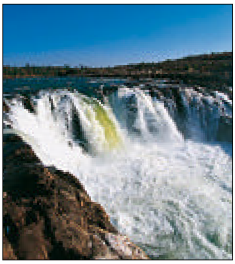
Since the mid-1980s, an ambitious scheme to dam the Narmada has been embroiled in controversy. The Narmada Valley Authority claim that the Sardar Sarovar Dam will bring electricity, irrigation and drinking water to millions of people. Environmental activists opposing the dam, who include Medha Patkar, leader of the "Save the Narmada" movement, and Arundhati Roy, the 1997 Booker Prize-winning author, say that the dam will inundate some 37,000 ha (91,429 acres) of forest, and displace more than 200,000 villagers, most of them poor tribal people whose distinctive culture and means of livelihood will be wiped out along with their lands. The Supreme Court of India has now ruled that work on the dam can continue. When completed, it will be the second largest in the world, after the Three Gorges Dam in China.

Anti-dam activists at a protest meeting

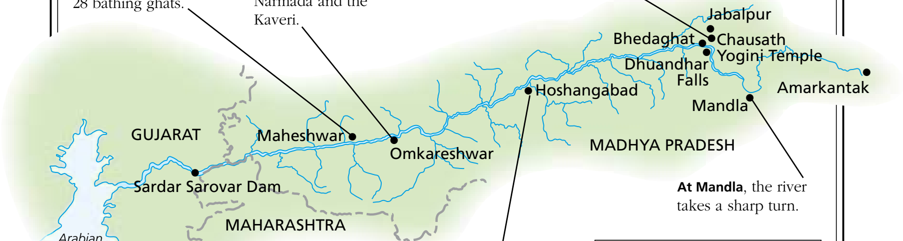
The Narmada River

Rising in the Amarkantak Plateau, where the Vindhya and Satpura ranges meet, the Narmada flows westward for 1,247 km (775 miles), across the states of Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat before entering the Arabian Sea. One of India's seven sacred rivers, the Narmada, according to Hindu mythology, was born of Lord Shiva's sweat when he performed his cosmic dance *(see p566)*. The Narmada is also believed to be the embodiment of purity, and a legend holds that every year the polluted Ganges comes in the guise of a dark woman, and takes a purifying dip in the Narmada. Sugarcane, cotton and bananas grow along the river, whose banks are lined with temples.

Image from Chausath Yogini Temple


Dhuandhar Falls *are a scenic spot, where the river drops 25 m (82 ft) down from the Amarkantak Plateau. The name Dhuandhar means "Stream of Smoke".*

Narmada Kund *at Amarkantak ("Neck of Shiva"), marks the source of the river. It is surrounded by 16th-century temples.*


Jabalpur
Bhedaghat
Chausath Yogini Temple
Dhuandhar Falls
Hoshangabad
Amarkantak
Mandla
GUJARAT
Maheshwar
Omkareshwar
MADHYA PRADESH
Sardar Sarovar Dam
MAHARASHTRA
Arabian Sea

Maheshwar has beautifully carved river front temples and 28 bathing ghats.

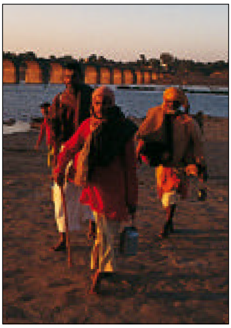
Omkareshwar is an Om-shaped island at the confluence of the Narmada and the Kaveri.

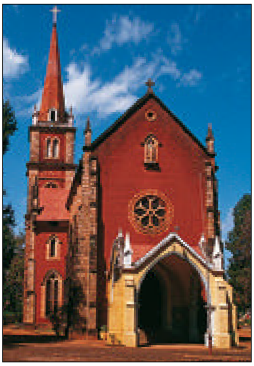
Chausath Yogini Temple which dates to the 10th century, is on a hilltop near the Marble Rocks.

At Mandla, the river takes a sharp turn.

Sethanighat Temple at Hoshangabad has an image of the Goddess Narmada.

The Marble Rocks *at Bhedaghat, where the fast-flowing river has cut a gorge, are especially spectacular on a moonlit night. Boat rides are the best way to experience their beauty.*


The Narmada Parikrama, *undertaken by many sadhus, is a pilgrimage on foot along both banks of the river. It covers 2,600 km (1,616 miles) and takes about three years.*



Pachmarhi's Christ Church, built in 1875, a relic of the Raj

Pachmarhi ⑱

Hoshangabad district. 210 km (130 miles) SE of Bhopal. 👥 *11,400.* 🚆 *Piparia, 47 km (29 miles) N of Pachmarhi, then taxi or bus.* ℹ *Pipariya, (07576) 22 3499.* 🚌 ℹ *MP Tourism, Amaltas Complex Station, (07578) 25 2100.* 🎉 *Shivratri (Feb/Mar).*

This delightful hill station, at an altitude of 1,067 m (3,501 ft), lies in the verdant hills of the Satpura Range. Its attractions include waterfalls and pools, and caves with prehistoric art. In 1857, Captain James Forsyth of the Bengal Lancers spotted this saucer-shaped plateau, and it was quickly developed into a sanatorium and army station by the British.

The town retains a genteel, Raj-era ambience, and among its colonial relics are the **Christ Church**, built in 1875, with beautiful stained-glass windows, and the **Army Music School** which still begins the day with rousing English martial tunes such as the Colonel Bogey March.

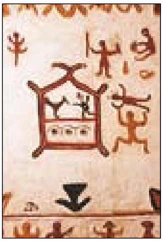
Pachmarhi means "Five Houses", and the town takes its name from the five ancient **Pandava Caves**, set in a garden south of the bus stop. From the caves, paths lead to the scenic **Apsara Vihar** ("Fairy Pool") and the **Rajat Prapat Waterfalls**.

The wooded hills around Pachmarhi, home of the Gond and Korku tribes, are dotted with cave shelters, some of them with paintings dating back 10,000 years. The most accessible of them is the **Mahadeo Cave**, 6 km (4 miles) from the Jai Stambh ("Victory Pillar") in the centre of town. The **Jatashankar Cave Temple**, dedicated to Shiva, is a short excursion, 2 km (1.3 mile) from the main bus stop. At the Shivratri festival, a colourful gathering of pilgrims and sadhus takes place here. En route to it is the **Harper's Cave**, so called because it has a painting of a man playing an instrument that looks like a harp.

Jabalpur ⑲

Jabalpur district. 330 km (205 miles) E of Bhopal. 👥 *951,500.* ✈ *14 km (8 miles) W of town centre.* 🚆 🚌 ℹ *MP Tourism, Railway Station, (0761) 267 7690.*

The gateway to Bandhavgarh *(see p239)* and Kanha *(see pp254–5)*, two of India's finest wildlife sanctuaries, Jabalpur was from the 12th to 16th centuries the capital of a powerful Gond tribal kingdom, whose most famous ruler was a brave and able woman, Rani Durgavati. In 1817 the British made it an army cantonment and administrative centre, to deal with the growing menace of gangs of highway bandits known as *thuggees*, who would rob travellers. In the 1830s, Colonel William Sleeman launched his famous campaign against the *thuggees*, and in a few years had wiped them out. The word thug (from *thuggee*), though, seems to have found a permanent place in the English language. In the bazaar is the **Rani Durgavati Museum** with stone sculptures and Gond tribal artifacts. The ruined **Madan Mahal Fort**, built by a Gond king in 1116, overlooks the town from a hill to the west.



Detail from a Gond tribal house

🏛 **Rani Durgavati Museum**
○ *Mon–Sat.*

Environs

The **Marble Rocks**, the **Chausath Yogini Temple** and the **Dhuandhar Falls** are 22 km (14 miles) southwest of Jabalpur.

Mandla ⑳

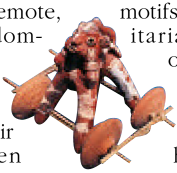
Mandla district. 95 km (59 miles) S of Jabalpur. 🚆 🚌 🧺 *daily.*

This sleepy town is situated on a loop in the Narmada river, which provides a natural moat for the 17th-century Gond Fort, now in ruins. Mandla is a sacred city for Gond tribals, whose warrior queen, Durgavati, committed suicide here in 1564 when she was defeated by the Mughal emperor Akbar's army. Temples and ghats line the banks of the river, where the Gonds perform their funeral rites. The main bazaar, near the bus stand, is interesting to explore with its shops selling tribal silver jewellery and bell metal.

The Narmada river at Mandla, lined by temples and ghats

The Folk Art of Bastar

Bastar district, in the newly-created state of Chhattisgarh, is a remote, thickly forested area, predominantly inhabited by tribal people and small communities of craftsmen. They live close to nature, and their arts and crafts have been inspired by the beauty, rhythm and vigour of forest creatures and plants. Animal, bird and plant motifs embellish many of the utilitarian, decorative and ritual objects that they fashion out of clay, wood, metal and cotton yarn. These can be seen at the weekly tribal markets held in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, as well as in handicrafts shops in Delhi.



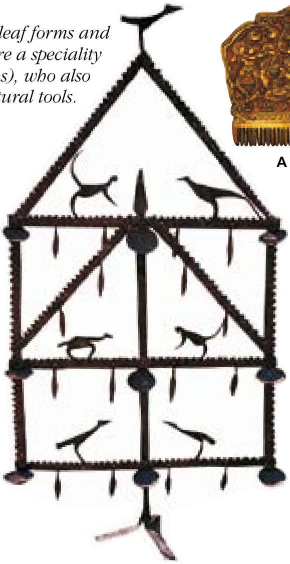
Clay toy on wheels

A newly-wed tribal couple in Bastar

Wooden walking sticks, *toys and ritual objects are carved out of the soft wood of roots and stems. The ingenious walking sticks make an eerie whistling sound, meant to scare away wild animals and evil spirits in the forest.*

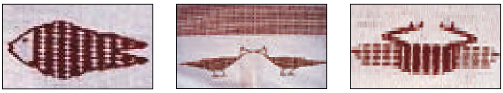
Combs *in wood and metal are exchanged between young tribal boys and girls of Bastar as tokens of love. The wooden combs are decorated with simple geometric motifs, while the brass ones are more ornately carved.*

Iron lamps, *embellished with leaf forms and lively animal and bird figures, are a speciality of Bastar's* lohars *(blacksmiths), who also make agricultural tools.*



A brass comb, carved with the image of a deity

Tribal potters *make fascinating clay ritual figures of mythical animals, horses and elephants. The materials used are the red and black clay from river banks, known for their strength and elasticity.*



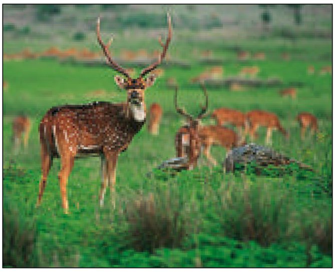
Textiles *for festive occasions are woven from thick unbleached cotton by the Panka community of weavers. The motifs, always inspired by nature, are woven in red madder-dyed yarn.*

Bronze images, *made by the Ghadva community of metalsmiths, using the lost wax technique, include this guardian deity of a Bastar village.*

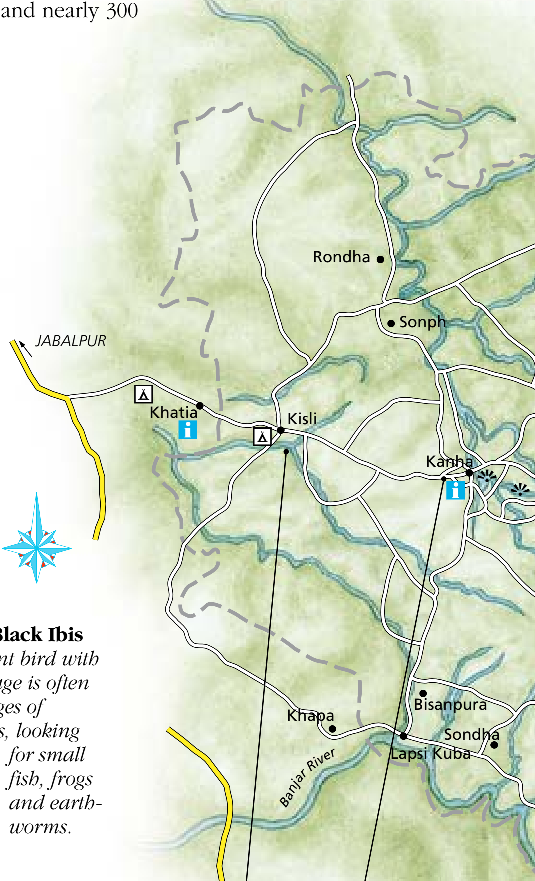
Kanha National Park ㉑

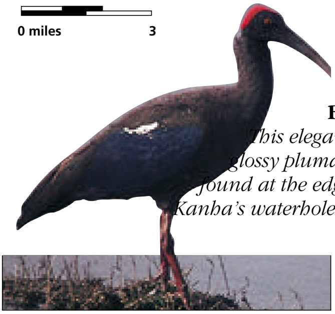
Often described as India's finest game sanctuary and a model for wildlife conservation, Kanha's magnificent landscape combines grassy meadows and flat-topped hills with meandering streams and lush deciduous forests. The setting for Rudyard Kipling's famous *The Jungle Book*, Kanha is today an important Project Tiger *(see p289)* Reserve. Along with Bandhavgarh *(see p239)*, it is one of the best places to spot these elusive creatures. The rich variety of wildlife found within this 1,954-sq km (754-sq mile) park, once the exclusive hunting ground of the British viceroys, includes deer, leopard, hyena, sloth bear, pythons and nearly 300 species of birds.

Common Mongoose
This ferret-like animal is a fierce fighter, particularly known for its masterly combats with snakes.



Dadars and Deer
Grassy meadows, known as dadars, characterize much of Kanha. They provide an ideal habitat for herbivores such as the spotted deer.





Black Ibis
This elegant bird with glossy plumage is often found at the edges of Kanha's waterholes, looking for small fish, frogs and earthworms.

Kipling Camp
This British-run complex (see p698), close to the park entrance at Kisli, has pleasant chalets, surrounded by forest. The camp arranges guided safaris.

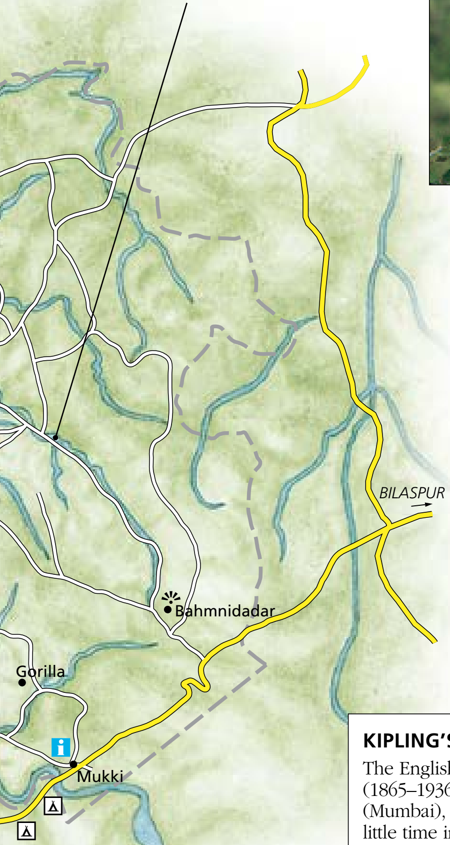
Interpretation centres, located at Khatia, Mukki and Kanha, have excellent films, models and books.

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp697–9 and pp726–7

Shravantal
This tranquil waterhole attracts several water birds, such as the lesser whistling teal and the shoveller. There are viewing platforms located nearby.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Mandla district. 196 km (122 miles) SE of Jabalpur. 🚌 *to Khatia and Kisli, the main entry points.* ℹ *MP Tourism, Kisli, (07649) 27 7227; Bhopal, (07649) 27 7242.* **Other entry points:** *Mukki.* ○ *Oct–Jun.* 🎥 📷 *extra charges.* ✋ *guides are compulsory.* 🍴 🐘 *from Kisli. Jeep safaris available. Visitors cannot walk in the park.*



KEY

- - Park boundary
🟨 Major road
═ Major road
ℹ Tourist information
✵ Viewpoint
⛺ Accommodation

Tiger
Kanha's tigers now number about 100. Park guides expertly track them through pug marks and the alarm calls of deer and langurs.

Central Indian Barasingha
Conservation has increased the numbers of this rare species, which was close to extinction 30 years ago.

KIPLING'S JUNGLE BOOK

The English writer Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936) was born in Bombay (Mumbai), and though he spent little time in India, the country provided the setting for many of his books. Among his most enduring works is *The Jungle Books*, delightful stories of animal behaviour and the law of the jungle. Set in the Seonee Forests of Kanha, their endearing hero is the wolf-reared boy Mowgli; and the many enchanting animal characters include Rikki-tikki-tavi, the mongoose, Shere Khan, the tiger, Kaa, the python, and Baloo, the bear.

THE JUNGLE BOOK

Jacket for Disney's version of *The Jungle Books*

EASTERN INDIA

INTRODUCING EASTERN INDIA 258–265
KOLKATA 266–283
WEST BENGAL & SIKKIM 284–303
ORISSA 304–321
ASSAM & THE NORTHEAST 322–339

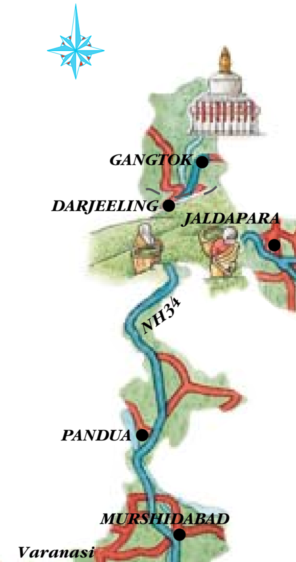
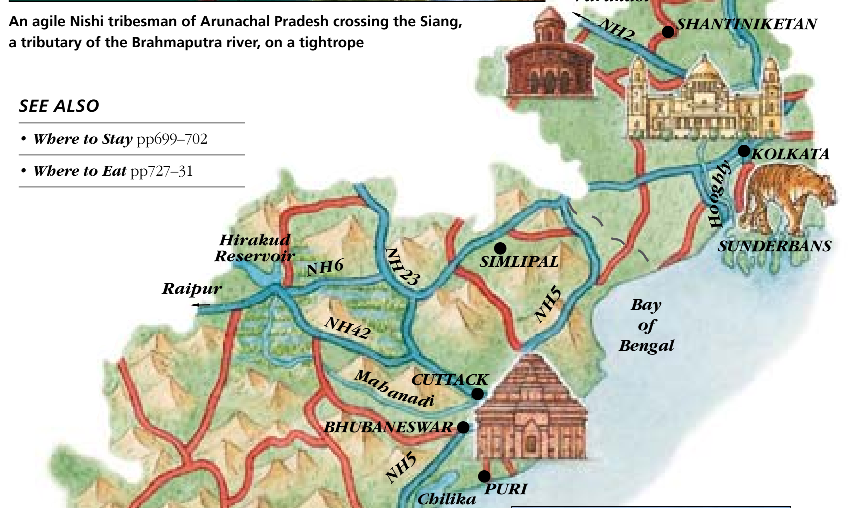
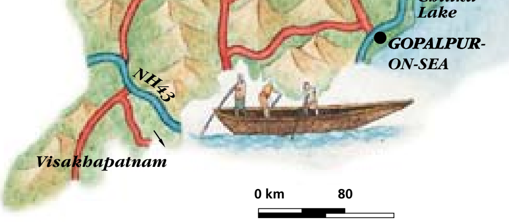
Introducing Eastern India

Kolkata, India's second largest city, is the best known destination for visitors to Eastern India. Apart from this endlessly fascinating metropolis, the region offers an astonishing diversity of landscapes, peoples and cultures. These include the steamy mangrove forests along the Bay of Bengal, habitat of the Royal Bengal tiger, the spectacular mountain vistas of Darjeeling (officially Darjiling) and Sikkim, and Orissa's magnificent temples and beaches. Further east are Assam and the northeastern states, home to many different tribal communities, whose distinct cultures flourish in areas of pristine natural beauty.

An agile Nishi tribesman of Arunachal Pradesh crossing the Siang, a tributary of the Brahmaputra river, on a tightrope

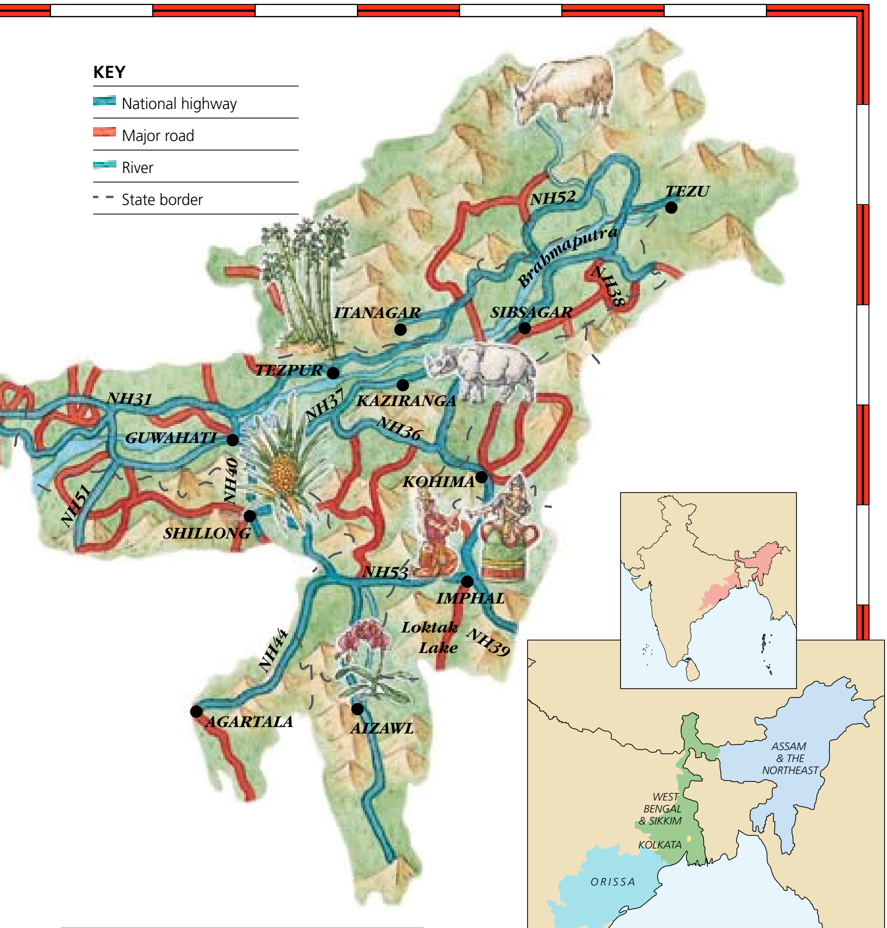
SEE ALSO

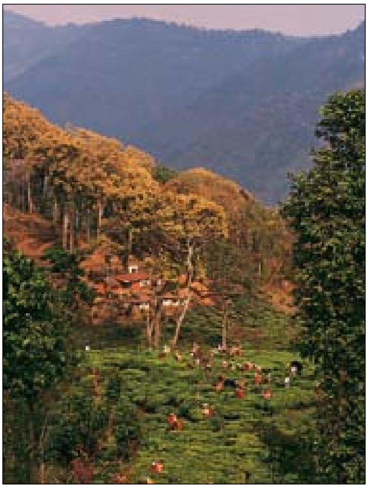
- ***Where to Stay*** pp699–702
- ***Where to Eat*** pp727–31




GANGTOK
DARJEELING
JALDAPARA
NH34
PANDUA
MURSHIDABAD
Varanasi
NH2
SHANTINIKETAN
KOLKATA
Hooghly
SUNDERBANS
Hirakud Reservoir
NH6
NH23
SIMLIPAL
Raipur
NH5
Bay of Bengal
NH42
Mahanadi
CUTTACK
BHUBANESWAR
NH5
PURI
Chilika Lake
GOPALPUR-ON-SEA
NH43
Visakhapatnam
0 km 80
0 miles 80

The 10th-century Mukteshwar Temple complex in Bhubaneswar

◁ **A woman fishing in Loktak Lake *(see p338)*, Manipur**


KEY
National highway
Major road
River
State border
NH52
TEZU
Brahmaputra
NH38
ITANAGAR
SIBSAGAR
TEZPUR
NH31
NH37
KAZIRANGA
GUWAHATI
NH36
NH40
KOHIMA
NH51
SHILLONG
NH53
IMPHAL
Loktak Lake
NH39
NH44
AGARTALA
AIZAWL
ASSAM & THE NORTHEAST
WEST BENGAL & SIKKIM
KOLKATA
ORISSA



Tea gardens in Darjeeling, nestling in the foothills of the Eastern Himalayas

GETTING AROUND

Kolkata, Guwahati and Bhubaneswar, the three major cities in this region, are well connected by air and rail to most parts of India. From Kolkata and Guwahati, there are regular flights to all the northeastern states. The hill station of Darjeeling, and Sikkim's capital, Gangtok, are accessible by air or rail up to Bagdogra-Siliguri, from where buses and taxis complete the journey up to the hills on National Highway 31. The delightful Himalayan Toy Train *(see p294)* also runs from Siliguri to Darjeeling, providing panoramic views of the Himalayas en route. From Kolkata, most destinations in West Bengal are reached on National Highway 34. In Orissa, the major sights are connected by National Highway 5. The gateway to the northeast, Guwahati in Assam, has good road links to the other six states on National Highways 37, 40 and 52. Visitors require travel permits for some destinations in the northeast *(see p758)*.

A PORTRAIT OF EASTERN INDIA

The peoples and cultures found in India's eastern states are as varied as the landscape itself. Stretching from the crowded metropolis of Kolkata to the remote tribal settlements of Arunachal Pradesh, which border on China and Myanmar, the region includes mountainous Sikkim, tropical Orissa, and the lush valleys of Assam, watered by the mighty Brahmaputra river.

Orchid from Meghalaya

West Bengal, the largest and most densely populated of the eastern states, offers the visitor a kaleidoscope of images. These range from the mangrove swamps of the Sunderbans, home of the Royal Bengal tiger, to the misty tea gardens of Darjeeling, and the unique vitality of the state capital Kolkata (formerly Calcutta).

Kolkata is a city that evokes extreme reactions: novelists exhaust metaphors trying to describe it, filmmakers are defeated by it, and even the average non-Bengali agrees that something about the city defines that abstract entity – "culture". As a headquarter of the East India Company, and later, the capital of British India, the city played an early host to crucial Western influences, especially English education. It witnessed the phenomenon popularly described as the Bengal Renaissance, a complex dynamic of socio-religious reform, and literary and artistic efflorescence, with a strong nationalistic undercurrent. Kolkata thus became the first Indian city to have an "intelligentsia". Rabindranath Tagore *(see p292)*, its most famous son, lives on through his stories, poems, plays and songs, loved to this day. Another cultural icon is the famous film director Satyajit Ray, whose work has had a profound impact on Asian art cinema. Since 1977, West Bengal has been under Communist rule. The culture of flag-waving processions, however, blends flawlessly with the

A village pond in Orissa, with a small Hindu temple on its banks

Statues being transported during Durga Puja, Kolkata's biggest festival

typical Kolkata pastime of *adda* – a lively mix of heated political debate, highbrow analyses and lowbrow gossip. This is all played out against a backdrop of crumbling vestiges of some splendid colonial architecture.

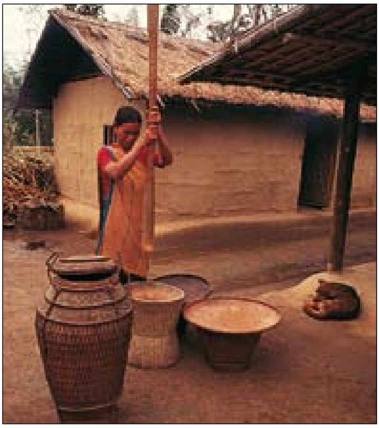
From Kolkata, many visitors travel south to the beaches and exquisitely sculpted temples of Orissa. The high-point of Orissa's cultural and religious year is the spectacular annual Rath Yatra, a festival held in the temple town of Puri *(see p312)*. The state pays a price for its scenic location on the Bay of Bengal – it is often hit by devastating cyclones during the monsoon. In recent years, however, Orissa's people, who include many forest-dwelling tribal groups, have enjoyed increasing prosperity, with schemes to develop the state's rich mineral resources and its growing tourism industry.

Dancer at monastery festival, Sikkim

North of Kolkata lies Sikkim, its skyline dominated by the snow-capped peaks of India's highest mountain, Kanchendzonga *(see p302)*, which soars to a height of 8,598 m (28,209 ft). Sikkim's culture borrows much from neighbouring Tibet and Nepal, and many people practice the Tibetan form of Buddhism, introduced in the 15th century by its former rulers, the Chhogyals, who came from Tibet. Much of Sikkim's cultural and religious life still revolves around its serene and beautiful Buddhist monasteries.

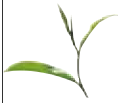
In the extreme eastern corner of India are Assam and the six northeastern states of Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura, connected to the rest of the country only by a thin corridor of land. This region is home to dozens of tribal communities, each with its own language and culture *(see pp336–7)*.

Tea dominates the economy of Assam, which produces more than half the tea grown in India, as well much of the country's oil. The other six states have rich agricultural and forest resources, and little industry. The isolation of the northeastern states, and their shared borders with Bangladesh, Bhutan, China and Myanmar, has led to violent separatist movements in some areas. Visitors need special permits *(see p759)* for this region whose main attraction is its pristine natural beauty and rare flora and fauna.

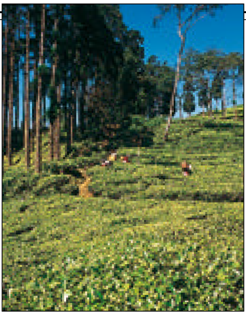


An Assamese woman pounding grain

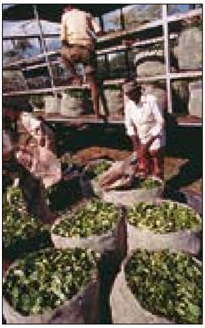
The Story of Indian Tea



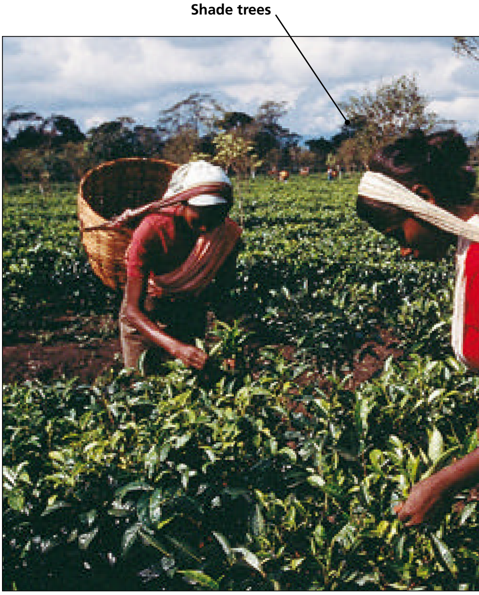
India is the world's largest producer of tea, perhaps the world's most popular drink. The tea plant *(Camellia sinensis)* is indigenous to Northeast India, and though tea was cultivated and drunk for centuries by the Singpho tribe of Arunachal Pradesh as a stimulant and medicinal brew, tea plantations for commercial exploitation were only established in the mid-19th century. Today, the Indian tea industry employs over a million people, half of whom are women, and produces about 850 million kg (1,874 million lb) of tea every year, most of which is grown in Assam, northern Bengal and Darjeeling (Darjiling).



Darjeeling's tea gardens *are a picturesque sight, covering terraced hill slopes upto an altitude of 1,950 m (6,398 ft).*



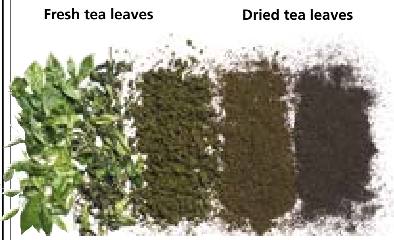
Fresh tea leaves *are plucked from April to December. A skilled picker can harvest 37 kg (82 lbs) of leaves a day, enough to yield 20 kg (44 lbs) of processed tea.*



PICKERS IN A TEA GARDEN

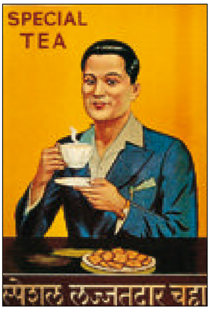
The tea bush, with its bright green oval leaves, is regularly pruned to keep its height low, allowing for convenient picking. Left wild, the plant can grow into a tree up to 10 m (33 ft) tall.

The withering process *blows warm air over the leaves, reducing their moisture content by half. The leaves are then rolled, pressed, fermented, and finally dried again.*



The CTC or crush, tear and curl method, *is used to process a more robust, granular Assam tea. The leaves are crushed to release their enzymes, before they are fermented and dried.*

Tea tasters *tell the quality of a tea by breathing on to leaves clutched in their fist, and inhaling the warmed aroma. To fix the base price at auctions, they also sample the brew, swilling the liquid round their tongues, in the manner of wine tasters.*


SPECIAL
TEA
स्पेशल लज्जतदार चहा

A 1950s poster advertising a brand of Indian tea

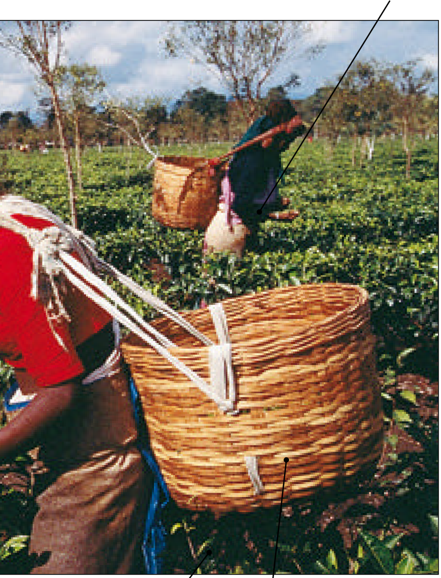
GOLDEN ORANGE PEKOE
FINE DARJEELING TEA

Darjeeling tea logo

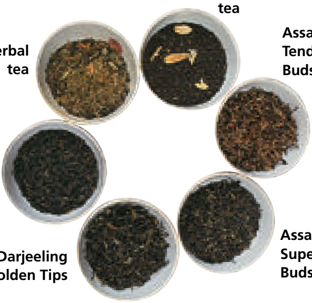
Assam tea logo

Darjeeling and Assam teas *are the best known Indian varieties. Darjeeling teas are famous for their delicate muscatel flavour, and the best ones have been sold at auction for up to US$220 for 1 kg (2.2 lbs). Assam tea has a stronger taste and darker colour.*

Women's supple fingers are preferred for the delicate task of plucking just the top two leaves.


Tea bush
Basket for carrying plucked tea leaves

Bronze tea kettles *with dragon-shaped handles and elephant trunk spouts, are typical of the Darjeeling and Sikkim region.*


Masala tea
Assam Tender Buds
Herbal tea
Green tea
Darjeeling Golden Tips
Assam Superior Buds

Different types of Indian tea *include green (unfermented) tea which is drunk in Kashmir, and* masala *tea spiced with cardamom and ginger. Long leaves give a superior brew, while broken leaves and tea dust go into tea bags.*

TEA ESTATES

In the early 19th century, the British began looking for a site in India, suitable for growing tea for the British market. They soon discovered wild tea plants growing in the northeast, and by 1850, vast tracts of tiger-populated jungle had been cleared in Assam, northern Bengal and Darjeeling to establish tea gardens. Today India has over 25,000 tea estates of varying size, each a self-contained world with its own school, shops and medical clinic. At its heart is the plantation manager's gracious bungalow, and a club where the planters used to meet for tennis and sundowners.

A typical tea planter's bungalow in northern Bengal

The Flavours of Eastern India

This region, watered by the rivers of the Gangetic Delta and washed by the sea, is a land of plenty, with an abundance of fresh vegetables, coconut and fish. Rice is the staple food and the region produces a wide variety. Freshwater fish is popular all across this riverine land. Pork and beef are eaten in most of the Northeastern states, while in Sikkim, the food is largely Tibetan with bamboo shoots and steamed dishes featuring on the menu. This region, with its large tea estates in the Himalayan foothills, is also the home of India's finest teas, especially from Darjeeling.

Green chillies and lime

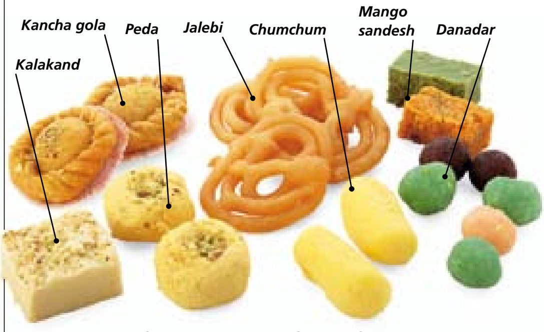
Bay leaves, chillies and other spices on sale at a weekly market

BASIC DISHES

In the delta and coastal areas of Bengal and Orissa, five spices – mustard, aniseed, fenugreek, cumin and black cumin seeds – are used to flavour the food while mustard oil is the preferred cooking fat. The two cuisines are similar, except that the Bengalis pride themselves on having a more sophisticated palate. *Dalma* is Orissa's signature dish and is a combination of vegetables and *arhar dal* (red gram). Vegetables, such as potatoes and aubergines (eggplant), are fried *(bhaja)*, mashed *(bharta)* and lightly or heavily spiced as in *dalna*, made with peas and cauliflower. Classic dishes include *shukto* (mixed vegetables with bitter gourd) and *mochar ghonto*, made from the banana flower.

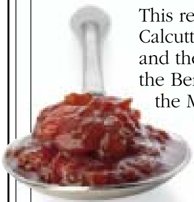
FISH AND SEAFOOD

It is fish that brings out the genius of cooking in this region. Every part is eaten – the head makes a delicious curry *(muri ghonto)* and the roe an excellent cocktail snack *(macher dimer bora)*. Popular fish of the region are *rahu* (carp), *betki* and the much-loved *hilsa* or *ilish* fish which floods the rivers during the monsoon. *Hilsa* is



A small selection of the many varieties of sweets from Bengal

LOCAL DISHES AND SPECIALITIES



Tomato chutney

This region's cuisine is varied. Historically, Calcutta (now Kolkata) has been a melting pot and the tradional Bangla *rana*, which combines the Bengali fish-based, delicately spiced food, the Muslim mutton dishes and the many-layered Dacci *parantha*, was enriched by the flavours of its Jewish, Armenian, Indo-Portuguese and English settlers. Fish is the centrepiece of both the Bengali and Oriya meal, and can be cooked with vegetables, as in *besar maacch*. Often, dried prawns are added to vegetables to enchance the flavour. Rice, a *dal* (lentils), vegetable preparations, sweet and sour chutneys, green chillies and slices of lime accompany the meal. In the Northeast, pork is a favourite. It is cooked with bamboo shoots, wild mushrooms or with ground rice and herbs in a one-pot dish called *onla*.

Momos, *Tibetan dumplings, are eaten with a fiery sauce of dried red chillies and a bowl of chicken broth.*

Women working in paddy fields in Orissa

cooked in mustard, fried crisp, smoked to melt its innumerable bones, steamed in a banana leaf *(ilish macher paturi)* or cooked in a light sauce of yoghurt and ginger *(doi maach)*. Other great regional inventions are the delicate *daab chingri*, where prawns are cooked in a tender coconut *(daab)* and *chingri malai* curry (prawns cooked in coconut milk).

OTHER FAVOURITES

Sikkim's distinctive cuisine is influenced also by Nepal and Bhutan. Some popular dishes are the Tibetan-style *thupka* (thick noodle soup), *momos* and the diverse ways of cooking local cottage cheese (*churpi)*. Assamese food combines pungent ingredients with fermented foods, such as the Manipuri *iromba*, made with fermented fish, vegetables and bamboo shoots. Other dishes include *akshi aong* (a delicious pork curry heavily seasoned with chillies) and *anok pongsuem* (steamed fish from Nagaland).

Basket of freshly caught fish being carried to the market

In Kolkata, food from the Raj still reigns supreme among other cuisines. Typical dishes are prawn cocktail, roast lamb with mint sauce and the ever-popular caramel custard.

SWEETS

Both Orissa and Bengal are known for their infinite variety of milk-based sweets. *Sandesh*, made from *chenna* (an Indian ricotta), is by far the most popular. Cottage cheese and syrup are also used to create many varieties of sweets including *kancha gola*, *chumchum* and *danadar*. *Peda* and *kalakand* are made with condensed milk and chopped nuts.

ON THE MENU

Bhapa hilsa *Hilsa* marinated with mustard and chillies and steamed in a banana leaf.

Chholar dal Yellow split peas seasoned with cumin seed and *garam masala*.

Kamla kheer A pudding with oranges and thickened milk.

Kosha mangsho A spicy mutton curry eaten with rice or fluffy fried breads *(luchi)*.

Mishti doi Yoghurt sweetened with molasses and garnished with chopped nuts.

Saag bhaja Stir-fried spinach, garnished with coconut.

Shoshey maachh Fish cooked in a mustard sauce.

Prawn malai curry *has prawns cooked in coconut cream with crushed mustard seeds and red chillies.*

Aloo posto, *common to both Bengal and Orissa, are potatoes cooked with a paste of poppy seeds.*

Caramel custard, *a Raj favourite, is a milk mixture baked in a dish with sweet caramel lining its base.*

KOLKATA

One of the world's great cities, Kolkata or Calcutta as it used to be known, has been through many incarnations. From an obscure village on the banks of the Hooghly river, it evolved into the capital of Great Britain's Indian empire. Today, this vibrant city with its distinct imperial flavour is the capital of the communist state of West Bengal.

In 1690, an English merchant, Job Charnock, established a trading post in the riverside village of Sutanuti which, together with neighbouring Govindapur and Kolikata, grew into the city of Calcutta. Over the next 200 years, the city became a flourishing commercial centre with imposing Victorian Gothic buildings, churches, and boulevards. Simultaneously, intellectual and cultural life bloomed, with a renaissance of Bengali art and literature, and the growth of a strong nationalist reform movement that led to the founding of the Brahmo Samaj, an enlightened off-shoot of Hinduism, and the establishment of Presidency College, then the foremost centre of English education. The decision to shift the capital to New Delhi in 1911 and the urban decay of the 1960s diminished some of the city's affluence, but never quenched its effervescence.

In 2001, Calcutta became Kolkata, the Bengali pronunciation of its name. The city is crowded and dirty in places, but is nevertheless full of character. The teeming life of the waterfront along the Strand, the noisy jumble of bazaars and pavement stalls, the residential streets with their once gracious mansions, all make for an electric, cosmopolitan atmosphere, rarely found in other Indian cities. Kolkata's charms straddle the decaying grandeur of the imperial capital and the smart restaurants and boutiques of Park Street. These coexist with the traditional Bengali world of Rabindranath Tagore's mansion at Jorasanko, the Kalighat temple and the potters' village of Kumartuli, and with the lively politics of the Coffee House and the Maidan, dominated by the Victoria Memorial, a spectacular symbol of imperial high noon.

View of the Hooghly river and the Howrah Bridge, the third longest cantilever bridge in the world

◁ **Statue of the young Queen Victoria in the central hall, Victoria Memorial**

Exploring Kolkata

The city of Kolkata lies in a long strip, with the river to its west and the wetlands to its east. Along the river front, the Strand, is the city centre with the Maidan, a large 400-ha (988-acre) park where Kolkata's residents play football, hold political rallies or enjoy the cool evenings. On the other side of the park is the city's main thoroughfare, the Chowringhee or Jawaharlal Nehru Road with shops, hotels, offices and residential buildings. The southern part of the city has the middle-class residential areas, while north Kolkata is the older part of the city, its maze of narrow lanes crowded with houses, cheek-by-jowl with shops and offices.

A street scene at New Market with Kolkata's distinctive taxis

SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

Historic Buildings, Areas & Neighbourhoods

Alipore ⑬
Around BBD Bagh pp270–71 ❶
Chowringhee ❾
College Street ❹
Jorasanko ⑱
Kumartuli ⑲
Marble Palace ⑰
Maidan ❼
Mother House ⑪
Nilhat House ❸
Nirmal Hridaya ⑮
Park Street Cemetery ⑫
Tangra ⑯

Museums

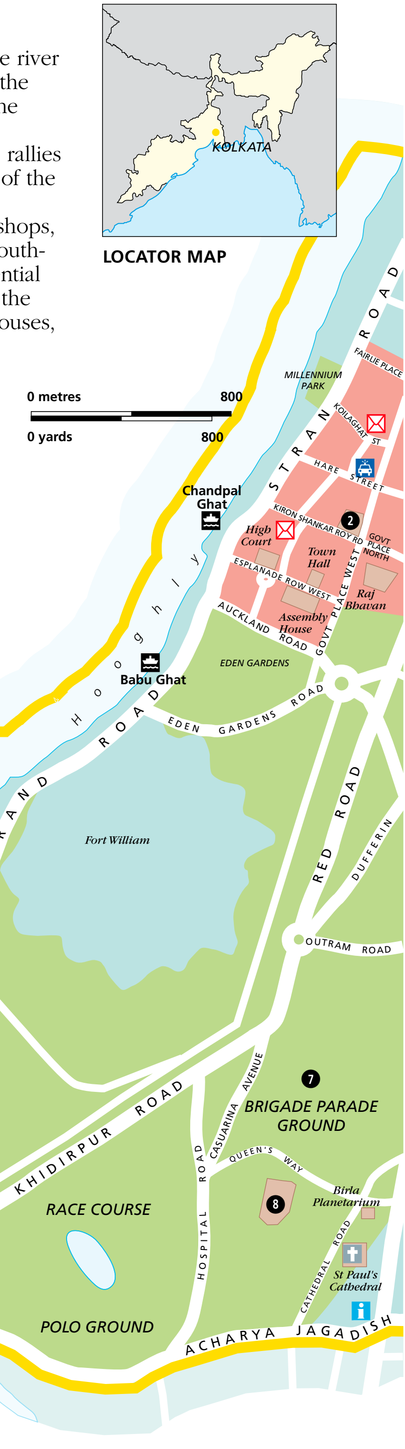
Indian Museum pp276–7 ❿
Victoria Memorial pp274–5 ❽

Churches, Temples & Mosques

Armenian Church of St Nazareth ❻
Nakhoda Mosque ❺
Kalighat ⑭
St John's Church ❷

Parks & Gardens

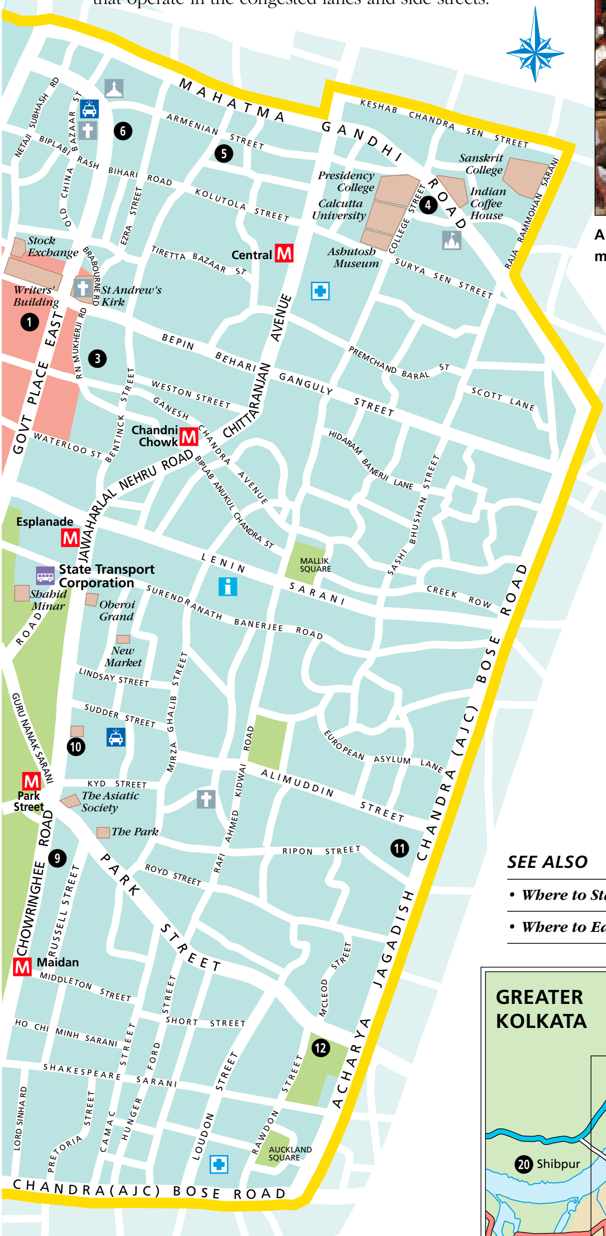
Botanical Gardens ⑳

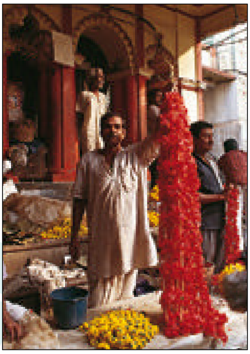

KOLKATA
LOCATOR MAP
0 metres 800
0 yards 800
MILLENNIUM PARK
FAIRLIE PLACE
ROAD
STRAND
KOILAGHAT ST
HARE STREET
KIRON SHANKAR ROY RD
2
GOVT PLACE NORTH
High Court
Town Hall
ESPLANADE ROW WEST
GOVT PLACE WEST
Raj Bhavan
Assembly House
AUCKLAND ROAD
Chandpal Ghat
Hooghly
Babu Ghat
EDEN GARDENS
EDEN GARDENS ROAD
STRAND ROAD
Fort William
RED ROAD
DUFFERIN
Prinsep Ghat
OUTRAM ROAD
Vidyasagar Setu
NAPIER ROAD
ST GEORGE'S GATE
KHIDIRPUR ROAD
CASUARINA AVENUE
7
BRIGADE PARADE GROUND
QUEEN'S WAY
HOSPITAL ROAD
8
Birla Planetarium
RACE COURSE
CATHEDRAL ROAD
St Paul's Cathedral
POLO GROUND
ACHARYA JAGADISH

For additional map symbols *see back flap*

GETTING AROUND

Central Kolkata is compact and can easily be covered on foot. Alternatives include taxis, or the often crowded buses and mini-buses. Trams and the Metro, linking the southern and northern parts of the city from Tollygunge to Dum Dum, are other options. A local mode of transport are cycle-rickshaws that operate in the congested lanes and side streets.


MAHATMA GANDHI ROAD
KESHAB CHANDRA SEN STREET
ARMENIAN STREET
SUBHASH RD
NETAJI
BIPLABI RASH BIHARI ROAD
CHINA BAZAAR ST
OLD
KOLUTOLA STREET
EZRA STREET
Presidency College
Calcutta University
Sanskrit College
Indian Coffee House
COLLEGE STREET
RAJA RAMMOHAN SARANI
Stock Exchange
Writers' Building
BRABOURNE RD
St Andrew's Kirk
TIRETTA BAZAAR ST
Central
Ashutosh Museum
SURYA SEN STREET
AVENUE
GOVT PLACE EAST
RN MUKHERJI RD
BEPIN BEHARI GANGULY STREET
PREMCHAND BARAL ST
SCOTT LANE
WESTON STREET
GANESH CHANDRA AVENUE
CHITTARANJAN
Chandni Chowk
WATERLOO ST
BENTINCK STREET
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU ROAD
BIPLAB ANUKUL CHANDRA ST
HIDARAM BANERJI LANE
SASHI BHUSHAN STREET
Esplanade
LENIN SARANI
MALLIK SQUARE
CREEK ROW
State Transport Corporation
Shahid Minar
Oberoi Grand
SURENDRANATH BANERJEE ROAD
New Market
LINDSAY STREET
MIRZA GHALIB STREET
SUDDER STREET
EUROPEAN ASYLUM LANE
ROAD
GURU NANAK SARANI
Park Street
KYD STREET
The Asiatic Society
RAFI AHMED KIDWAI ROAD
ALIMUDDIN STREET
The Park
RIPON STREET
ROYD STREET
PARK STREET
CHOWRINGHEE ROAD
RUSSELL STREET
Maidan
MIDDLETON STREET
SHORT STREET
MCLEOD STREET
HO CHI MINH SARANI
SHAKESPEARE SARANI
FORD STREET
LOUDON STREET
RAWDON STREET
AUCKLAND SQUARE
CAMAC
HUNGERFORD
PRETORIA STREET
LORD SINHA RD
CHANDRA (AJC) BOSE ROAD
ACHARYA JAGADISH CHANDRA (AJC) BOSE ROAD
1
3
4
5
6
9
10
11
12



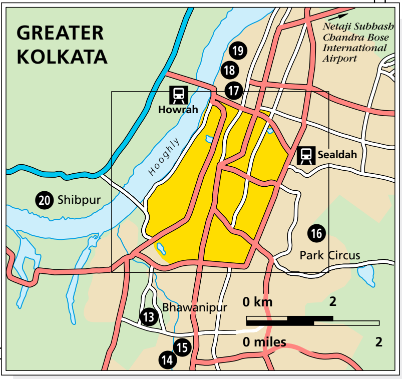
A colourful stall in one of Kolkata's main flower markets

KEY

- 🟥 Street-by-Street area: *see pp270–71*
- 🚉 Railway station
- 🚌 Bus station
- ⛴ Ferry port
- Ⓜ Metro station
- ℹ Tourist information
- ✚ Hospital
- 🚓 Police station
- ⛩ Temple
- ▲ Gurdwara
- ✝ Church
- ☒ Post office
- ━ National highway
- ━ Major road
- ═ Minor road

SEE ALSO

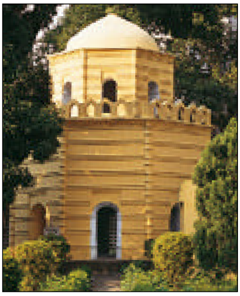
- ***Where to Stay*** p669–700
- ***Where to Eat*** pp727–8


GREATER KOLKATA
Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose International Airport
19
18
17
Howrah
Hooghly
Sealdah
20 Shibpur
16
Park Circus
Bhawanipur
13
15
14
0 km
2
0 miles
2

Street-by-Street: Around BBD Bagh ❶

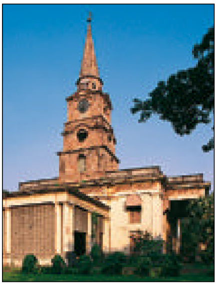
Signage of the Royal Insurance Building

This is the "heart" of Kolkata and was the site of the original Kolikata, one of the villages from which the city grew. The small tank at its core was where three young Indian freedom fighters, Binay, Badal and Dinesh, shot the British inspector-general of police in 1930. The square, now named after them, is ringed by British colonial buildings, dating to the 18th and early 19th centuries. These were once the centres of British administrative and commercial control.

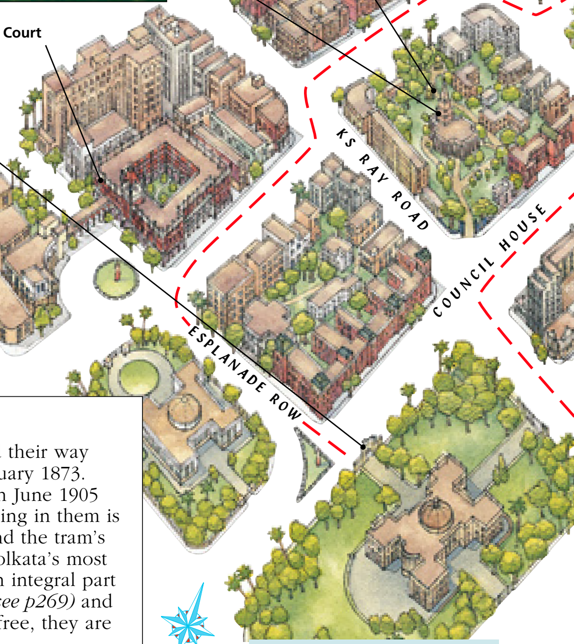


Job Charnock's Tomb
Job Charnock is believed to have laid the foundations of the English settlement in Kolkata.

★ St John's Church
The design of this church (see p272) was *based on London's St Martin-in-the-Fields. The constructing engineers wanted the spire to be higher, but desisted fearing the soggy sub-soil.*

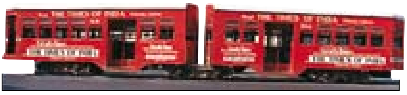


Gates of Raj Bhavan
Magnificent Neo-Classical gateways lead to the old Government House, built in the mid-18th century. This is now the residence of the state governor, and can be viewed from across the road.



TRAMS IN KOLKATA

Horse drawn trams first trundled their way from Sealdah station on 24 February 1873. Electric trams were introduced in June 1905 and have survived till today. Riding in them is a pleasant if rattly experience and the tram's slowly clanging bell is one of Kolkata's most characteristic sounds. Though an integral part of the city's transport network *(see p269)* and appreciated for being pollution free, they are under threat for being too slow.



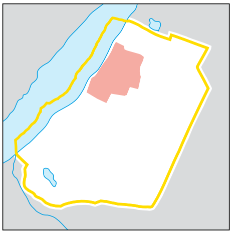
An electric tram plying on the streets of Kolkata

STAR SIGHTS

- ★ St John's Church
- ★ GPO
- ★ Writers' Building

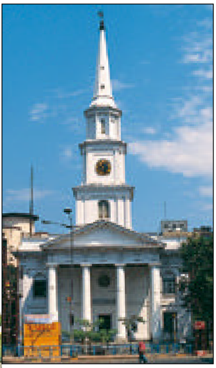
★ GPO

Kolkata's General Post Office is housed in this building with its impressive rotunda. Designed by Walter Granville and built in the 1860s, it stands on the site of the old mud fort.



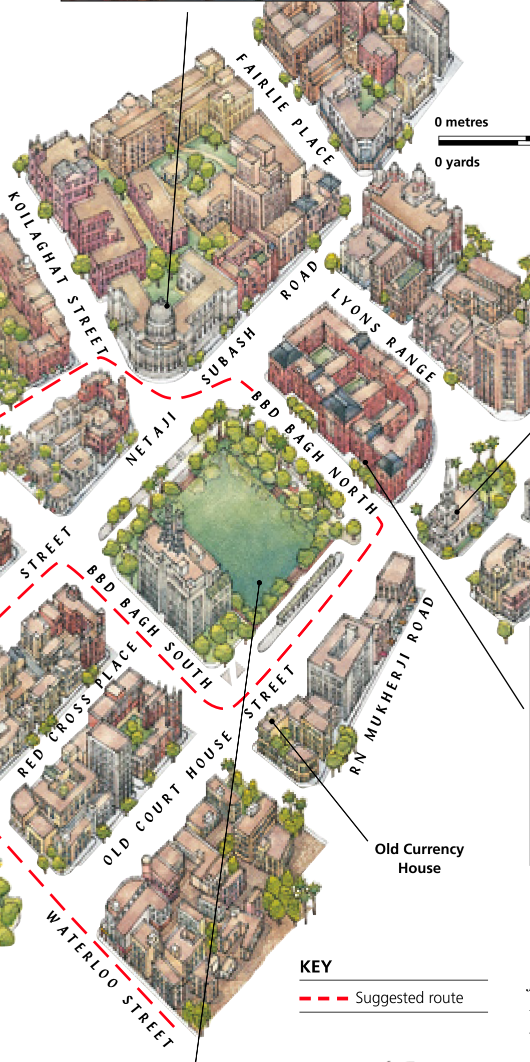
LOCATOR MAP

See Kolkata Map pp268–9

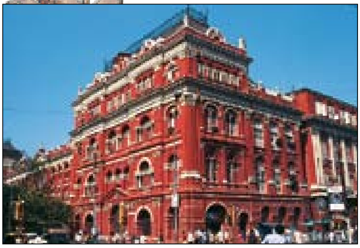


St Andrew's Kirk

Consecrated in 1818, the church has a soaring steeple, a magnificent organ and a beautifully carved pulpit.


FAIRLIE PLACE
0 metres 100
0 yards 100
KOILAGHAT STREET
SUBASH ROAD
LYONS RANGE
NETAJI
BBD BAGH NORTH
STREET
BBD BAGH SOUTH
RED CROSS PLACE
STREET
RN MUKHERJI ROAD
OLD COURT HOUSE
WATERLOO STREET

Old Currency House

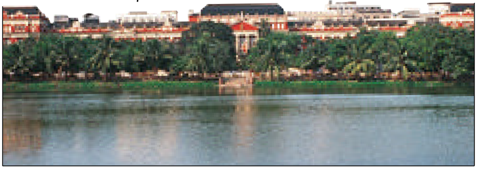


★ Writers' Building

The hub of colonial India from 1777, this imposing building with its Corinthian façade derives its name from the "writers" (clerks) of the East India Company who worked here. The state government has its offices here.

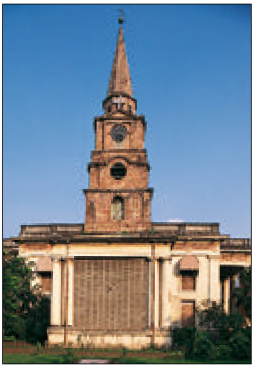
KEY

- - - Suggested route



View Across Lal Dighi Tank

The East India Company's seat of administration, their courts of justice and the churches for their Sunday services were set up around this small tank, fed by springs.



View of St John's Church with its soaring spire

St John's Church ❷

Council House St. ***Tel*** *(033) 2243 6098.* ○ *daily.* ✝ *10am–5pm.*

The first parish church in Kolkata, St John's Church was established in 1787. It boasts an impressive stained-glass panel of *The Last Supper*, in which the artist Johann Zoffany gave the 12 disciples the faces of British personalities famous in the city at the time.

St John's has many associations with the history of the English East India Company. Warren Hastings, Governor of Bengal, was married here. In the churchyard is a memorial to Lady Canning, the vicereine who died in 1861. Her name lives on in popular memory because she was much addicted to a fried, syrupy sweetmeat, which was named after her (it is pronounced "leddy-kenny" in Bengali). The mausoleum of Job Charnock *(see p270)* also stands here.

A short distance away is the memorial to the victims of the notorious "Black Hole Tragedy", an event which became one of the favourite horror stories of the Raj. When Siraj-ud-Daula, the Nawab of Bengal, captured the old British fort which stood on the site of the present General Post Office *(see p271)* in 1756, he imprisoned over 100 British inhabitants in a small, airless cell. Only 23 people were found alive the next morning – the rest had died of asphyxiation and thirst.

Nilhat House ❸

Behind Old Mission Church. *Auctions held on Mon & Tue at 8:30am. Prior permission required from brokerage houses, J Thomas* ***Tel*** *(033) 2248 6201.*

A tea auction centre, Nilhat House stands on the site of an indigo trading house (*nil* means indigo, while *hat* is market). It dates to 1861; only the tea auction houses in London are older. Tea has always played an important role in the state's economy, especially in the colonial period. But even today, the bidding for teas from Darjeeling and the Dooars in northern Bengal and Assam *(see pp262–3)* is brisk. The auction prices are determined by the opinions of tea tasters, whose highly trained palates can immediately distinguish the type, plantation and year of each brew. Visitors can view and participate in these animated proceedings with prior permission.

College Street ❹

Bidhan Sarani, North Kolkata. **Ashutosh Museum** ***Tel*** *(033) 2241 0071.* ○ *10:30am–5pm Mon–Fri; 10:30am–1:30pm Sat.* ⊘

As the location of Kolkata's elite educational institutions, College Street is the heart of Bengali intellectual life. The pavements are crowded with stalls selling textbooks, exam guides, classics and second-hand books of all kinds – some people even claim to have discovered valuable first editions. Many of Kolkata's best bookshops are also found here.

The **Presidency College** was established here in 1817 and was then known as the Hindu College. Started as an institution for the city's rich who wanted their sons to receive a Western-style education, it boasts great scholars, scientists and writers such as film director, Satyajit Ray (1922–92) and economist Amartya Sen, who won the Nobel Prize for Economics in the year 1998.

Across the road is the dark, cavernous **Indian Coffee House**, the favourite haunt of the city's intelligentsia since it opened in 1942. Even today, waiters in shabby cummerbunds serve endless cups of strong coffee to teachers, students, writers and poets.

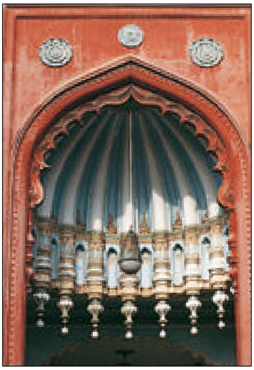
Down a lane opposite Presidency College is the **Sanskrit College**, founded in 1824 to promote the study of ancient Indian languages, history and culture. Its ground floor has a small display of medieval Hindu sculpture and palm-leaf manuscripts.

Next to Presidency College are the buildings of **Calcutta University**, founded in 1857. Today, the gracious 19th-century main structure is dwarfed by modern high-rise additions, through which the old edifice, with its Ionic pillars and symmetrical proportions, is barely visible.

On the ground floor, the **Ashutosh Museum** specializes in the art of Eastern India. The exhibits include a fine collection of terracottas, bronzes, coins, old manuscripts and some exquisite examples of *kantha* (a quilting technique) and Kalighat paintings, or *pats* *(see p279)*.

PROMILA BOOK STALL

A second-hand bookstore on College Street



Detail of the ornamental entrance of Nakhoda Mosque

Nakhoda Mosque ⑤

Zakaria St. ***Tel*** *(033) 2235 4183.*
○ *daily.* ● *to non–Muslims during times of prayer.* ⊘

The city's largest mosque, Nakhoda Mosque is based on the design of Akbar's tomb at Sikandra *(see p178).* Built in 1926, it is surmounted by a dome and faced with red sandstone, with minarets that rise to a height of 46 m (151 ft). It can accommodate over 10,000 people for prayer, but on major religious occasions, people spill out on to the street. Nearby is the **Hotel Royal**, famous for its rich *biryani* and *chaanp* (goat's ribs cooked in spiced gravy). This is a fascinating neighbourhood with 19th-century mansions, old bazaars and temples.

Armenian Church of St Nazareth ⑥

Armenian St, near Brabourne Rd. ***Tel*** *(033) 2242 4308.* ○ *daily.*

Built by Armenian traders in 1724, the Armenian Church of St Nazareth stands on the site of the original 1707 wooden church, which had burnt down. Immigrants from Isfahan in Persia, the Armenians were among the earliest foreign traders to settle in Kolkata. Once a thriving community, today their numbers have dwindled. The church has a unique rounded spire, and its grounds house several graves with ornate tombstones.

Maidan ⑦

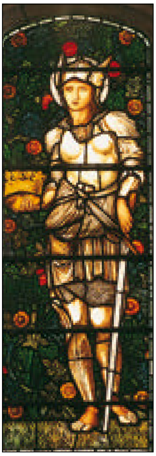
Bounded by Strand Rd, AJC Bose Rd, Cathedral Rd & Eden Gardens Rd.
St Paul's Cathedral ○ *daily.*
✝ *7:30am, 8:30am & 6pm Sun.*

In the heart of the city, this 400-ha (988-acre) park stretches from the Hooghly river in the west to Chowringhee in the east, and contains several interesting areas and buildings. In the early 18th century, a dense jungle was cut down to build **Fort William**, after the earlier mud fort was destroyed in 1756. The present fort, a squat, irregular octagon, was completed in 1781. Today, it is the headquarters of the Indian Army's Eastern Command and not usually open to the public.

To the north of the fort are the pleasantly laid out **Eden Gardens**, where international cricket matches are held. They were conceived and designed in 1841 by Emily and Fanny Eden, the sisters of the governor general, Lord Auckland. At the northern corner of the Maidan is the **Burmese Pavilion** set in a small lake. This was brought here by Lord Dalhousie from Prome in Myanmar in 1854.

To its east is the **Shahid Minar**, literally "Martyrs' Memorial", originally called Ochterlony Monument. It was named after Sir David Ochterlony, one of the Raj's daredevil soldiers, who had led the British armies to victory in the Anglo-Nepal War in 1816. The monument is a fluted Doric column, 48 m (157 ft) high with a cupola for a roof. To its south is the Maidan's most impressive building, the **Victoria Memorial** *(see pp274–5).*

A short distance from the Memorial is **St Paul's Cathedral**. It was designed by Major WN Forbes in 1847 and its spire, modelled on Britain's Canterbury Cathedral, was added after the earlier one was destroyed in the 1934 earthquake. Its grounds are lined with trees and the interior is notable for a superb stained-glass window, designed by Edward Burne-Jones in memory of the viceroy, Lord Mayo. The **Race Course** is on the southwestern corner of the Maidan. Racing is popular in Kolkata and races are held throughout the year. Polo is played here for a few weeks in the winter season. The city's two famous football clubs, Mohun Bagan and East Bengal, are based in the Maidan.



Stained glass, St Paul's Cathedral

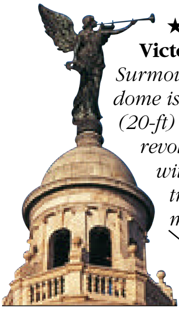
On Sunday afternoons, a lively fair with acrobats, magicians and jugglers takes place at the northern end of the Maidan. This is also the venue for large political rallies.

Eden Gardens, the site of many cricket matches

Victoria Memorial ⑧

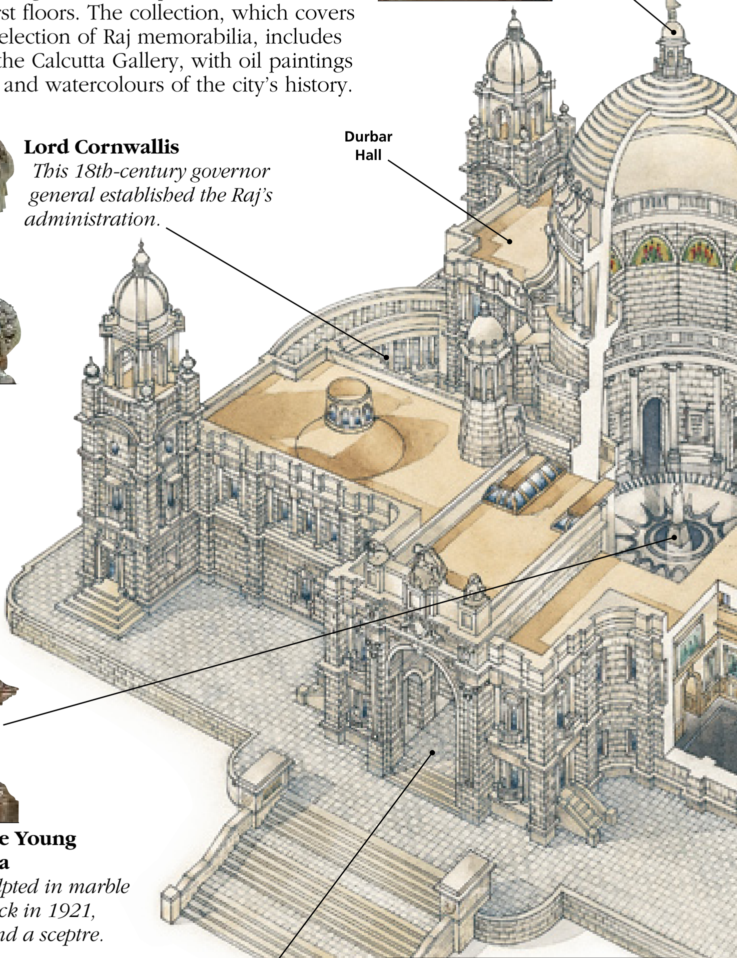
Imperial lion at the entrance

The city's most celebrated landmark, this monument to imperial self-confidence was the brainchild of Lord Curzon (1859–1925), one of British India's most flamboyant viceroys. The domed Classical structure, completed in 1921, was constructed with marble from Makrana, which also supplied marble for the Taj Mahal, and financed by "donations" from princes and ordinary citizens. Now a museum, its 25 galleries are spread over the ground and first floors. The collection, which covers a fascinating selection of Raj memorabilia, includes the Calcutta Gallery, with oil paintings and watercolours of the city's history.



★ Angel of Victory
Surmounting the dome is this 6-m (20-ft) high bronze revolving figure, with a trumpet, made in Italy.

Lord Cornwallis
This 18th-century governor general established the Raj's administration.



★ Statue of the Young Queen Victoria
The queen, sculpted in marble by Thomas Brock in 1921, holds an orb and a sceptre.

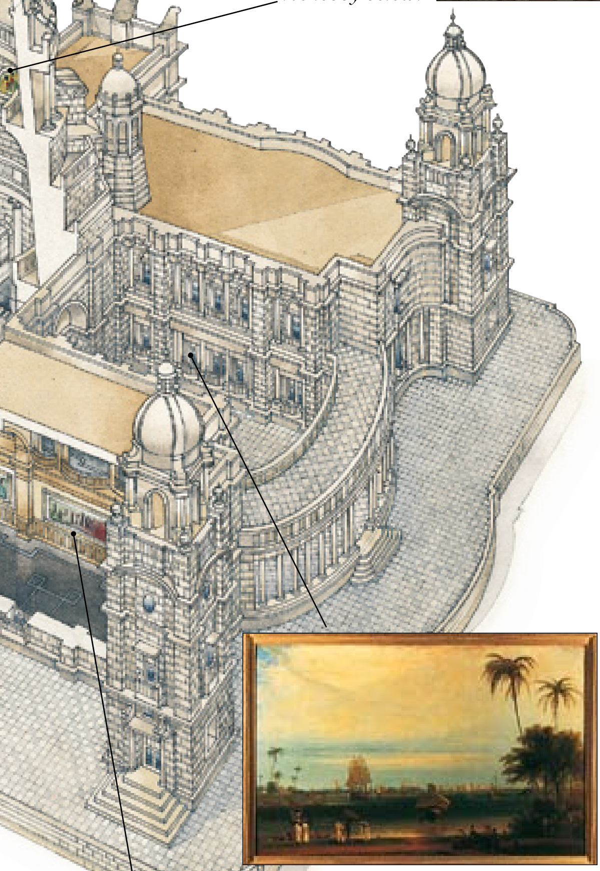
STAR SIGHTS

- ★ Angel of Victory
- ★ Statue of the Young Queen Victoria

General View
The impressive marble façade of the Victoria Memorial.

Bronze Panel
Two bronze panels depicting a vice-regal procession decorate the bridge at the northern entrance to the Memworial.

Dome
Skylights in the marble rotunda allow light to filter through to illuminate the lobby below.



Calcutta Gallery
This gallery has an excellent collection of landscapes painted by 18th-century British artists.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Queen's Way. ***Tel*** *(033) 2223 5142.*
○ *Tue–Sun.* ● *public hols.* ▨
▨ ▨ **Son et Lumière** *(English) 7.15pm, Oct–Feb, 7.45pm, Mar–Jun*
▨ **www**.victoriamemorial-cal.org

Exploring the Victoria Memorial

The foundation stone of this impressive structure was laid by the Prince of Wales, later King George V, during his visit to India in 1906. Designed by William Emerson, President of the British Institute of Architects, the building stands in spacious grounds, dotted with ornamental palms, ponds and statues. The museum contains over 10,000 artifacts that represent various facets of the Raj, such as a desk owned by Queen Victoria, embellished with paintings of Indian birds. Among the fine collection of paintings are works by the 18th-century landscape artists, Thomas Daniell and his nephew William Daniell, whose aquatints and lithographs of Indian scenes virtually determined the way India was perceived in 19th-century Britain. The collection also includes paintings by Johann Zoffany (1733–1810), portraits of imperial stalwarts, records of the East India Company, an exquisite set of Persian manuscripts, and paintings that depict Kolkata's history.

A majestic bronze statue of Queen Victoria by Sir George Frampton

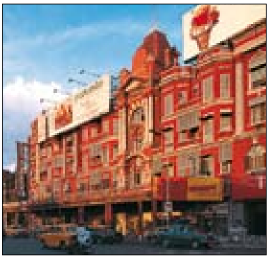
Chowringhee ❾

JL Nehru Rd. **The Asiatic Society** *Park St.* ***Tel*** *(033) 2229 2249.* **Library** ○ *Mon–Sat.* **Museum** ○ *noon–4pm Mon–Fri.* **www**.asiaticsocietycal.com

Now called Jawaharlal Nehru Road, Chowringhee was a fashionable promenade during the Raj. This thoroughfare derives its name from a fakir (holy man), Jungle Giri Chowringhee, who once lived here. At its northern end is the **Oberoi Grand** *(see p699)*. Established in the 1870s, and known as the Grand Hotel, it was considered "the most Popular, Fashionable and Attractive Hotel in India".

Behind the Oberoi Grand is **New Market** *(see p282)*, built in 1874. Surmounted by a clock tower, shops here are placed along many interconnected corridors. One of the oldest is the Jewish confectionery and bakery, Nahoum's, which has a beguiling variety of cookies, fudge and spiced cakes.

At its southern end, on Park Street, is **The Asiatic Society**, founded in 1784 by Sir William Jones, a formidable Oriental scholar. He was the first to establish the common origins of Latin and Sanskrit, and called Sanskrit the "mother of all languages". The Society's **Museum** and **Library** have a large collection of over 60,000 old and rare manuscripts in Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian, as well as artifacts such as a 3rd-century BC stone edict, and 17th-century folios from the *Padshahnama,* Abdul Hamid Lahori's history of the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan's rule.

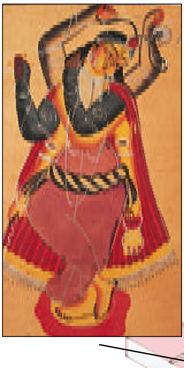


The well-preserved period façade of Chowringhee building

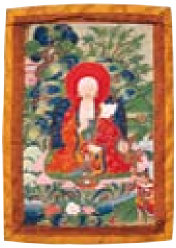
Indian Museum ❿

Gupta era gold coin

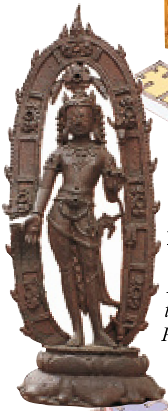
The oldest and largest museum in India, the Indian Museum was founded in 1814. The imposing building, designed by Walter Granville, also the architect of the General Post Office *(see p271)*, dates to 1878. The museum's impressive collection is noted for artifacts from the 2,500 BC Indus Valley Civilization, sculpture from Gandhara, the superbly sculpted railings from the 2,000-year-old Bharhut Stupa, and a fine collection of 5th-century Gupta coins.



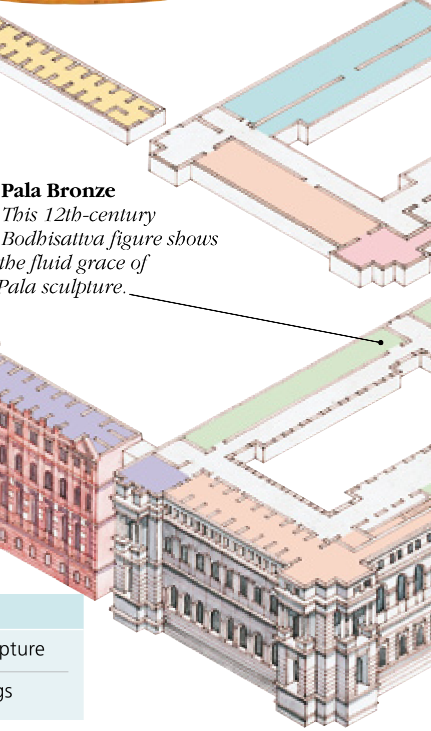
Kalighat Painting
Painted in the folk style of the 19th-century Kalighat school, this represents the Vaishnava saint Chaitanya.



Arhat Vanavasin Thangka
This silk painting of a Buddhist sage is from Tibet.



Pala Bronze
This 12th-century Bodhisattva figure shows the fluid grace of Pala sculpture.

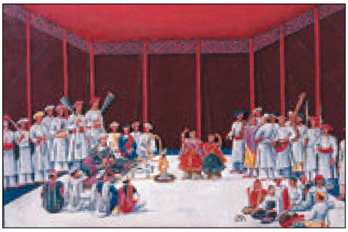


STAR SIGHTS

★ Gandhara Sculpture

★ Bharhut Railings

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp699–700 and pp727–8



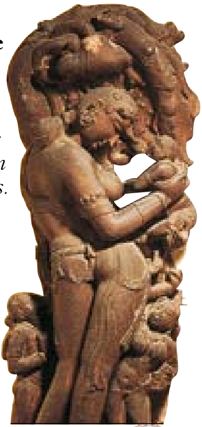
Nautch Party
This 19th-century Company School Painting of nautch *or dancing girls, combines European and Indian techniques of art.*

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

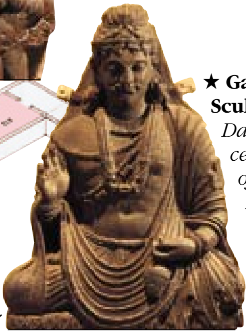
JL Nehru Rd. ***Tel*** *(033) 2286 1702.*
○ *Tue–Sun.* ● *public hols.* ♿
📷 extra charges ▣
Note: *Educational film shows daily, and special exhibitions*

KEY

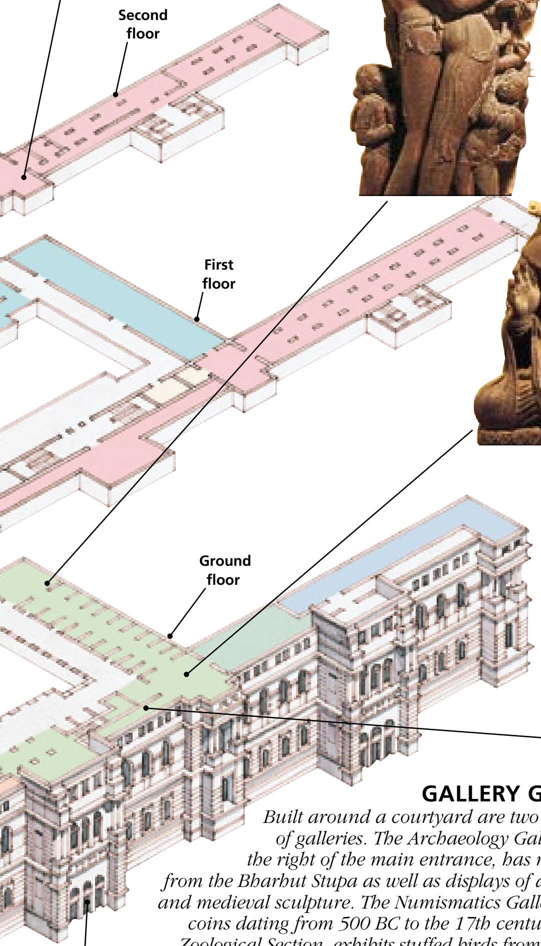
🟥 Art and Textile Gallery
🟧 Geology Section
🟨 Botany Section
🟦 Zoological Section
🟪 Anthropology Section
🟩 Archaeology Gallery
⬜ Egyptian Gallery
🟩 Numismatics Gallery
🟦 Library

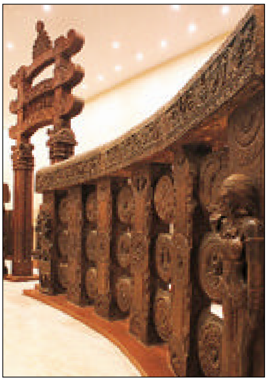


Chandela Sculpture
Dating to the 10th–11th century, this sensuous maiden from Khajuraho holds a baby in her arms while two small children cling to her knees.



★ Gandhara Sculpture
Dating to the 3rd century, this image of Maitreya, the Future Buddha, shows a strong Greek influence in the way the folds of the robe are sculpted.





★ Bharhut Railings
Episodes from Buddhist scriptures, events from the Buddha's life and scenes from daily life are carved on these railings.

GALLERY GUIDE

Built around a courtyard are two storeys of galleries. The Archaeology Gallery, to the right of the main entrance, has railings from the Bharhut Stupa as well as displays of ancient and medieval sculpture. The Numismatics Gallery has coins dating from 500 BC to the 17th century. The Zoological Section, exhibits stuffed birds from British zoological expeditions. The second floor has the Art Gallery with paintings and miniatures.

A Sister of Charity outside the Mother House

Mother House ⓫

54A, AJC Bose Rd. ***Tel*** *(033) 2217 2277.* ○ *Fri–Wed.* **www**.motherteresa.org **Donations** *are tax-exempt.*

The city of Kolkata is inextricably linked to the name of Mother Teresa. At first a teaching nun at Loreto Convent, the death and devastation she witnessed in the city during the famine of 1943, and Partition of India in 1947 *(see p56)*, made her leave this cloistered world and dedicate her life to the poor. The Missionaries of Charity was a new order she formed in 1950, with the Mother House as its headquarters. This simple building is today also her final resting place. Her grave is on the ground floor in a hall. It has no ornamentation, only a Bible placed on it. On a board on the wall are two words, "I thirst".

Park Street Cemetery ⓬

Bounded by Rawdon St & Park St. ○ *Mon–Fri.*

A romantic, overgrown haven of Raj nostalgia in the middle of the city, the Park Street Cemetery was opened in August 1767 to receive the body of John Wood, an official in the Custom House of the East India Company. From that date till the first half of the 19th century, it served as the resting place of many important Europeans who died in Kolkata. It was this graveyard which gave Park Street its original name, Burial Ground Road. Its name Park Street was derived from the park that Elijah Impey, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, established in the area. His grave is in this cemetery as well. William Jones, the great scholar and founder of The Asiatic Society, lies under a pyramid-shaped tomb. Henry Vansittart, one of the first governors of Bengal, is also buried here; so too is Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1809-1831), a Eurasian teacher at Hindu College in the mid-19th century, who died at the young age of 23. Derozio inspired his students to question all established traditions and was one of the pioneers of what has come to be known as the Bengal Renaissance *(see p260)*. The best known tomb is that of Rose Aylmer, an early love of the poet, Walter Savage Landor. Her tomb, an unpretentious spiralled obelisk, is inscribed with lines by Landor. Also buried here is Colonel Kyd, founder of the Botanical Gardens *(see p281)*.

Alipore ⓭

Bounded by AJC Bose Rd, Belvedere Rd & Alipore Rd. **Alipore Zoological Gardens** ○ *9am–5pm Fri–Wed.* **National Library** ***Tel*** *(033) 2479 1384.* ○ *daily.* ● *public hols.* **Agri Horticultural Society** ***Tel*** *(033) 2479 0834.* ○ *7–10am & 2–6pm Mon–Sat.* **www**.agrihorticultureindia.com *Flower Show (Feb).*

Best described as the city's most fashionable address, the suburb of Alipore in south Kolkata is a sylvan world of tree-lined avenues, with palatial houses surrounded by well-kept lawns. Kolkata's zoo, the **Alipore Zoological Gardens**, was established here in 1875 and has a large collection of birds and mammals. Situated nearby, the Belvedere Estate has a broad expanse of lawn and also houses the **National Library**. This is the country's largest library with over two million manuscripts and books. The library has now been shifted to the Bhasha Bhawan, a new building on the same

Weathered tombs in the tree-shaded Park Street Cemetery

The National Library in Alipore, with its colonnaded verandah

grounds. Built in the Italian Renaissance style, the original building, Belvedere, was once the residence of the lieutenant governors of Bengal.

Further down are the lush gardens of the **Agri Horticultural Society**, founded in September 1820 by the missionary William Carey *(see p287)*, to develop and promote agriculture and horticulture in India. In the first 40 years of its existence, seeds, bulbs and ornamental plants were imported from England, South Africa and Southeast Asia. Since then the Society has amassed a varied collection of rare flowering trees and herbs. It's also an excellent place to buy winter annuals.

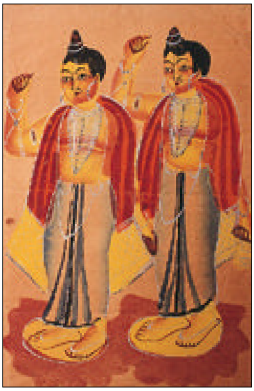
Kalighat ⑭

Ashutosh Mukherjee Rd. ○ *daily.*

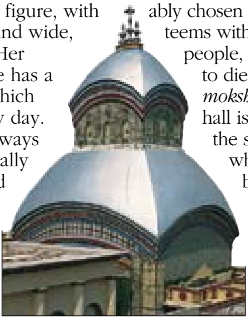
Kolkata's oldest pilgrimage site, Kalighat finds mention in numerous medieval poems and ballads. Legend has it that the god Shiva, in a fury of grief at the death of his wife, Sati (an incarnation of Parvati), slung her body on his shoulders and danced the terrible *tandava nritya* (dance of death), destroying everything in his path. To stop the carnage, Vishnu flung his magic *chakra* (discus) at Sati's body, and the dismembered pieces scattered across the land. The spot where the little toe fell became Kalighat, and some believe that the name Kolkata is derived from this.

The present Kali Temple dates to the early 19th century, but this has been a sacred spot for much longer. The image of the goddess in the dark inner sanctum is of a wild, untamed figure, with tangled tresses and wide, ferocious eyes. Her extended tongue has a gold covering which is changed every day. The temple is always crowded, especially on Tuesdays and Saturdays.

Kalighat has, over the years, become synonymous with Kalighat *pats*, a distinctive painting style adopted by the scroll-painters of Bengal. They use paper and water-based paints, instead of tempera, to depict contemporary subjects. A good collection of Kalighat *pats* is on display at the Indian Museum *(see pp276–7).*



Kalighat painting of two wandering mendicants



The brick-and-mortar spire of the Kali Temple at Kalighat

Nirmal Hridaya ⑮

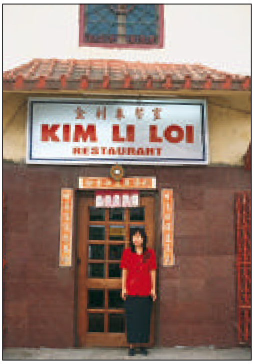
251, Kalighat Rd. ***Tel*** *(033) 2464 4223.* ○ *8–11am & 3–5pm Mon–Sat, 3–5pm Sun.*

Mother Teresa's home for the destitute, Nirmal Hridaya ("Pure Heart"), is near the Kali Temple. The site was probably chosen as this holy place teems with poor and old people, who come here to die and attain *moksha*. A large, clean hall is full of beds for the sick and dying who are cared for by nuns, in their characteristic white and blue saris. Visitors who want to work as volunteers must first register at Mother House.

MOTHER TERESA (1910–1997)

Mother Teresa, born Agnes Gonxa Bojaxhiu in Albania, came to Calcutta in 1929 to begin life as a teacher. The poverty and suffering she saw impelled her to leave the convent. She set up the order of the Missionaries of Charity and her indefatigable work among the lepers, the terminally ill, the unwanted and the poor earned her universal respect and love. To the people of Kolkata she was just "Mother" and their love for her transcended boundaries of religion, class and community. She was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979.

Mother Teresa on a postage stamp



Kim Li Loi, a family-run Chinese restaurant in Tangra

Tangra ⑯

Off the Eastern Metropolitan Bypass. 🚩 *Chinese New Year (Feb).*

This eastern suburb is the city's new Chinatown. Chinese immigration to Kolkata began in the 18th century, and today large numbers of this still significant community have settled here. Tangra preserves the rich and varied culture of its immigrant population. A Chinese newspaper and journal are published from here, and there are many tiny restaurants, mostly extensions of family kitchens. "Tangra Chinese", with its discernibly Indian taste, is today as distinct a cuisine as Szechwan and Cantonese. Many of the city's leather tanneries are based at Tangra as, traditionally, the Chinese were involved with the very lucrative shoe trade.

Marble Palace ⑰

46, Muktaram Babu St. ● *10am–4pm Mon, Thu, & Sat.* ⊘ ☞ **Entry permit** *Contact Tourism Centre, 3/2 BBD Bagh, (033) 2248 8271.*

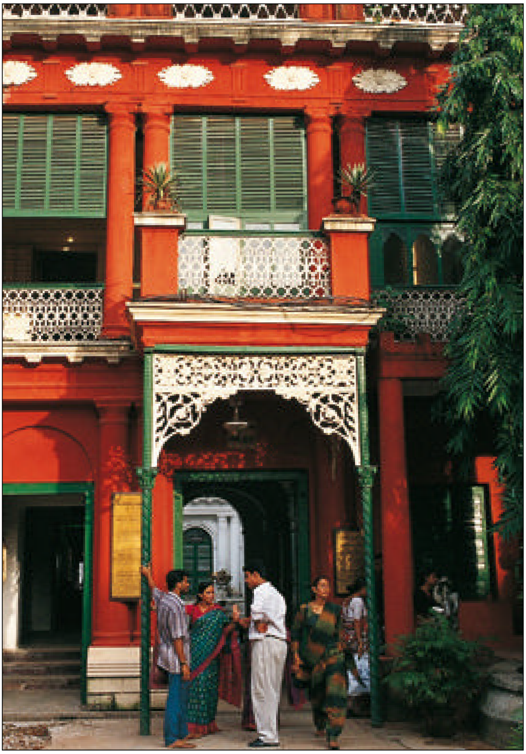
This opulent mansion was built in 1835 by Raja Rajendra Mullick, a wealthy *zamindar* (landowner). His descendants still live here, but most of the house is open to visitors. Rajendra Mullick, who had travelled extensively in Europe, brought back an eclectic collection of Venetian chandeliers, Ming vases and Egyptian statuary that he housed in his Classical-fronted mansion, built around a colonnaded courtyard. Today, the Marble Palace provides a wonderful glimpse into the life of a rich 19th-century Bengali household. Nearly a 100 varieties of marble have been used on the floors and the dark halls are hung with paintings by European artists. In the courtyard is the family temple, while the grounds have a rock garden and aviary, home to mynahs and peacocks.

Jorasanko ⑱

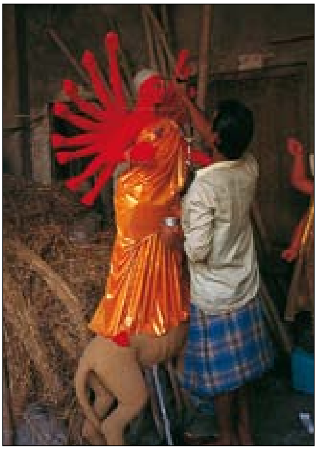
6/4, Dwarkanath Tagore Lane. **Rabindra Bharati Museum** ***Tel*** *(033) 2269 6610.* ○ *10am–5pm Mon–Fri, 10am–2pm Sat & Sun.* ✋ **Son et Lumière** *6 & 7pm (English).* ● *Mon & Thu.* ✋ 🚩 *Rabindranath Tagore's birthday (May).*

A major centre of Bengali art and culture in the 19th century, Jorasanko is the ancestral home of Bengal's favourite son, Rabindranath Tagore *(see p292)*. Built in 1785, this simple three-storeyed, red brick structure housed the lively and cultivated Tagore family, many of whose members were prominent intellectuals and social reformers. The lane on which the house is located is named after Dwarkanath Tagore (1784–1846), the poet's father and a wealthy entrepreneur.

Today, the old house has been expanded and turned into **Rabindra Bharati University**, which specializes in the study of Bengali cultural forms. The house itself has been preserved as the **Rabindra Bharati Museum**. Beginning with the room in which Rabindranath Tagore died, it traces the history of the illustrious Tagore family with a large collection of art and memorabilia. There is an entire section devoted to paintings by Rabindranath.



The red brick Rabindra Bharati University, at Jorasanko



Final touches being given to a Durga image

Kumartuli ⓳

North Chitpur Rd.

Literally, the "Area of the Potters", Kumartuli is a maze of alleys, where images of various Hindu gods and goddesses are made. The best time to visit is late August and early September as this is when potters create the idols for the ten-day-long Durga Puja. It is fascinating to watch them at work, moulding the clay, strengthened by straw and pith, to create images of the fish-eyed goddess Durga, her face often modelled on popular Hindi film actresses and her hair long and flowing.

Nearby is an ancient temple dedicated to Shiva, known as the **Buro Shiva** or "Old Shiva Temple". This is probably the only extant terracotta temple in the city, embellished with terracotta tablets in the frieze below the roof. Further away is Kolkata's celebrated landmark, the giant **Howrah Bridge** (now called Rabindra Setu), an airy, elegant mesh of steel that appears to float above the turgid Hooghly river *(see p267)*. The sunset behind the bridge is one of the loveliest sights in the city. Built in 1943 to replace the old pontoon bridge, this is the third longest cantilever bridge in the world, measuring 97 m (318 ft) in height and 705 m (2,313 ft) in length. The bridge links Kolkata with Howrah (Haora), the city's main railway station on the opposite bank, and is always clogged with traffic. To its south is the impressive Vidyasagar Setu. This massive cable-stayed suspension bridge was built in 1993 to connect South Kolkata with Shibpur and Howrah station.

Botanical Gardens ⓴

W bank of the Hooghly river, Shibpur. ⛴ *from Babu Ghat.* ***Tel*** *(033) 2668 9970.* ○ daily. **The Palm House** ○ *Mon–Fri.* **The National Herbarium** ○ *Mon–Fri.* ● *Weekends and public holidays.*

The Botanical gardens, in the Shibpur suburb of Howrah, were established in 1787 by Colonel Kyd, an official of the East India Company. It has an astonishing array of flora including ferns, cacti and palms, and boasts of plants from every continent. The chief attraction is the magnificent banyan tree *(Ficus bengalensis)*. Claimed to be the largest banyan tree in the world, it is more than 200 years old and its branches, giving rise to nearly 300 aerial roots, spread over 60 m (197 ft). The central trunk was, however, struck by lightning in 1919 and was subsequently removed. The sight of this tree alone is worth the long journey.

The gigantic leaves of the *Victoria amazonica* lily, Botanical Gardens

THE DURGA PUJA

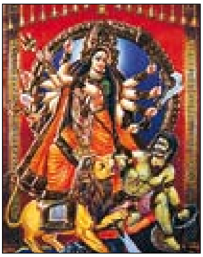


Image of the ten-armed Durga, slaying Mahisha

Durga Puja is West Bengal's favourite annual ritual in which simply everyone participates. Usually held between September and October, it heralds the advent of autumn and the new harvest. Each locality sets up its own *puja*, organized by local clubs and associations, financed through public subscriptions, though some of the old Bengali families perform their own *puja* in their ancestral houses. Brightly illuminated *pandals* (bamboo structures), often shaped like famous monuments such as the White House or the Taj Mahal, are erected on roads and in parks, and an image of the goddess Durga *(see p25)* is installed within. The goddess is elaborately decorated and in traditional Bengali homes, real jewellery is used. Presents are exchanged and great feasts are prepared. On the final day, the images are immersed in the Hooghly, to the frantic beating of drums and cries of "Jai Ma Durga!" ("Hail to Mother Durga!").

Shopping & Entertainment in Kolkata

Kolkata is a delightful place to shop, even though it lacks the fashionable boutiques of Delhi or Mumbai. There are several old-style bazaars and street hawkers, and fewer glitzy shopping malls. Many shops stock a wide variety of goods, such as those in New Market; others cater to special niches. In certain places one needs to drive hard bargains – the shopkeepers both expect and enjoy this process. Kolkata was once famous for its auction houses, but sadly most of these have now shut down. This is also a culturally vibrant city, with regular performances of theatre, music and film shows. Exhibitions by well-known contemporary artists are also held throughout the year.

SHOPS AND MARKETS

Kolkata's **New Market** *(see p276)*, on Lindsay Street, is the city's most famous shopping centre. Officially the Sir Stuart Hogg New Municipal Market, established in 1874, this is still a shopper's paradise, where one can find everything from Chinese sausages and fortune cookies to Tibetan curios and gold jewellery. **Sudder Street**, behind the Indian Museum, is another popular shopping centre. Each locality has its own bazaar; the best known of these are Gariahat, Bhowanipore (or Jadubabu's Bazaar), Bowbazaar and Maniktola. Wandering through bazaars offers a glimpse of street life, but be prepared for touts and beggars.

Shops usually open from 10am to 7pm and remain closed on Sundays and public holidays. New Market and some markets also close after 2pm on Saturday, so do check the timings in advance.

SARIS AND TEXTILES

The best shops for saris unique to West Bengal are **Ananda**, **Meera Bose** and **Kundahar**. Ananda also has an excellent selection of dhotis and *kurtas*. The upmarket boutique **Ritu's** has superb garments designed by Ritu Kumar, one of India's top designers. Exquisite hand-embroidered table linen and children's clothes are available at **Good Companions**. Carpets and *dhurries* are available at **Calcutta Carpets**.

HANDICRAFTS AND GIFTS

Handicrafts special to West Bengal such as the terracotta Bankura horse *(see p291)*, are on sale at **Manjusha Emporium**. The **Crafts Council of West Bengal** is another fascinating outlet that sells traditional saris as well as artifacts, while **Sasha** has a wide range of curios and bric-a-brac. Tea of the finest quality is available at **Dolly's Tea Shop** in the Dakshinapan shopping complex. This complex also has numerous other state handicraft emporia.

BOOKS AND MUSIC

This city of intellectuals and Nobel laureates, such as Rabindranath Tagore and Amartya Sen, is heaven for those willing to search for second-hand bargains in the shops that line the pavements of **College Street** *(see p273)* and **Free School Street**. Many of these shops have a good selection of rare and out of print books. **Dasgupta & Co** has a large choice, though there is no place to browse. The **Seagull Bookstore**, on the other hand, encourages browsing and is the best place for serious literature and academic books. **Starmark** too, has a large stock that ranges from thrillers to encyclopedias. The centrally located **Oxford Bookstore**, is also well-stocked and has a good café.

Music aficionados are advised to try **Music World** which has a good selection of Indian and Western CDs and audio cassettes. On Chitpur Road towards Nakhoda Mosque *(see p273)*, are music shops selling sitars, *sarods, veenas*, flutes and violins. Free School Street is about the only place in India where record albums of 1950s Elvis Presley and Jerry Lee Lewis or 1960s Beatles and Rolling Stones are easily available.

SWEETS

West Bengal's sweets are famous. The variety is bewildering, but the two most popular are *sandesh* and *rosogulla (see p264)*. The latter is on sale in every sweetshop, but those in **KC Das & Sons**, the family which invented this delicacy, are the best. *Sandesh*, made of cottage cheese and sugar (molasses or *gur* in the winter months), are of two kinds, those that are soft and those that have a harder outer crust. Both are widely available, but the best are found in **Nakur Nandy & Girish Chandra Dey, Makhan Lal Das & Sons** and **Balaram Mullick**.

ENTERTAINMENT GUIDES, TICKETS AND VENUES

The *Sunday Telegraph* magazine and other English language dailies list the day's entertainment on their engagements page. Other useful sources of information are *Cal Calling* and *Kolkata: This Fortnight*, which is distributed by the West Bengal Tourist office. Information on tickets as well as reviews of plays and concerts also appear with the announcements.

Kolkata's cultural centre is just off the Maidan. The **Rabindra Sadan Complex**, named after Rabindranath Tagore, includes the **Academy of Fine Arts**. Next door is **Nandan**, where retrospectives of films by Satyajit Ray and other renowned directors, are regularly held. Other venues around the city include **89 Cinemas**, **Gorky Sadan**, **Fame**, and the well-known **British Council**.

Exhibitions by well-known as well as up and coming artists are held at the city's many art galleries, especially the **Birla Academy of Art and Culture**, **CIMA Gallery** and **Chitrakoot Gallery**. CIMA Gallery also has a gift shop.

MUSIC AND THEATRE

Performances of West Bengal's well-established classical and folk theatre *(jatra)* are staged throughout the year by semi-professional and amateur groups. Bengali theatre is perhaps the most vibrant in the country. Its rich repertoire includes plays with historical and socially relevant themes as well as translations of Greek, European, Sanskrit and Hindi classics. *Jatra*, on the other hand, was introduced by the Vaishnava saint, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, in the 16th century, and is based on musical plays that revolve around the Krishna legend *(see p179)*. Characterized by dramatic acting interspersed with song and dance, the plays cater to both rural and urban audiences.

Another popular form of entertainment is Rabindra Sangeet. These melodious songs composed by Tagore include folk songs that are traditionally sung by boatmen who ply the Ganges. Regular concerts are held in the city, and attract audiences who continue to revere Tagore.

CLUBS AND NIGHTLIFE

Kolkata is a city of clubs which date to colonial times and are open only to members. Sometimes temporary membership can be arranged, particularly at the **Tollygunge Club** *(see p699)* which has huge grounds with rare trees and birds. Visitors can stay at the club, which has the comfort of a top hotel but at reasonable rates.

Kolkata's once glittering nightlife dwindled during the political upheavals of the 1960s. It is reviving now and affluent youth throng hotels where the city's nightclubs, such as **Shisha, Someplace Else**, **Tantra** and **Big Ben**, are situated.

DIRECTORY

SARIS AND TEXTILES

Ananda
13, Russell St.
Tel *(033) 2229 2275.*

Calcutta Carpets
43, Park St.
Tel *(033) 2229 9464.*

Good Companions
13 C, Russell St.
Tel *(033) 2229 0473.*

Kundahar
10, Dr Sarat Banerjee Rd.
Tel *(033) 2466 1111.*

Meera Bose
8, Dr Sarat Banerjee Rd.
Tel *(033) 2466 4043.*

Ritu's
111, Park St.
Tel *(033) 2226 2792.*

HANDICRAFTS AND GIFTS

Manjusha Emporium
Dakshinapan Complex,
Dhakuria
Tel *(033) 2423 7099.*

Crafts Council of West Bengal
64, Lake Place.
Tel *(033) 2465 6792.*

Dolly's Tea Shop
G–62, Dakshinapan,
2, Gariahat (S).
Tel *(033) 2483 4521.*

Sasha
27, Mirza Ghalib St.
Tel *(033) 2252 1586.*

BOOKS AND MUSIC

Dasgupta & Company
54/3, College St.
Tel *(033) 2241 4609.*

Music World
18 G, Park St.
Tel *(033) 2217 0751.*

Oxford Bookstore
17, Park St.
Tel *(033) 2229 7662.*

Seagull Bookstore
31, SP Mukherjee Rd.
Tel *(033) 2476 5869.*

Starmark
3, Lord Sinha Rd.
Tel *(033) 2282 2617.*

SWEETS

Balaram Mullick
2, Puddapukur Rd.
Bhowanipur.
Tel *(033) 2475 9490.*

KC Das & Sons
11, Esplanade East.
Tel *(033) 2248 5920.*

Makhan Lal Das & Sons
356, Upper Chitpur Rd.
Tel *(033) 2555 8182.*

Nakur Nandy & Girish Chandra Dey
56, Ramdulal Sarkar St.
Tel *(033) 2241 0048.*

ENTERTAINMENT VENUES

89 Cinemas
89 C, Maulana Abdul
Kalam Azad Sarani.
Tel *(033) 2320 8900.*

Academy of Fine Arts
2, Cathedral Rd.
Tel *(033) 2223 4302.*

Birla Academy of Art and Culture
108, Southern Ave.
Tel *(033) 2466 2843.*

British Council
16, Camac St.
Tel *(033) 2282 5370.*

CIMA Gallery
Sunny Towers, Ashutosh
Chowdhury Ave.
Tel *(033) 2485 8717.*

Chitrakoot Gallery
55, Gariahat Rd.
Tel *(033) 2461 8812.*

Fame
Metropolis Mall, Hiland
Park, 925 Chak Garia.
Tel *(033) 2436 7744.*

Gorky Sadan
3, Gorky Terrace.
Tel *(033) 2283 2743.*

Nandan
1/1, AJC Bose Rd.
Tel *(033) 2223 1210.*

Rabindra Sadan
Cathedral Rd.
Tel *(033) 2223 9917.*

CLUBS AND NIGHTLIFE

Big Ben
The Kenilworth,
Little Russell St.
Tel *(033) 2282 3939.*

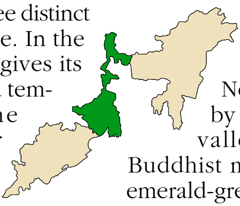
Shisha
22, Camac Street,
Block B, 5th Floor.
Tel *(033) 2281 1313.*

Someplace Else
The Park Hotel, Park St.
Tel *(033) 2249 9000.*

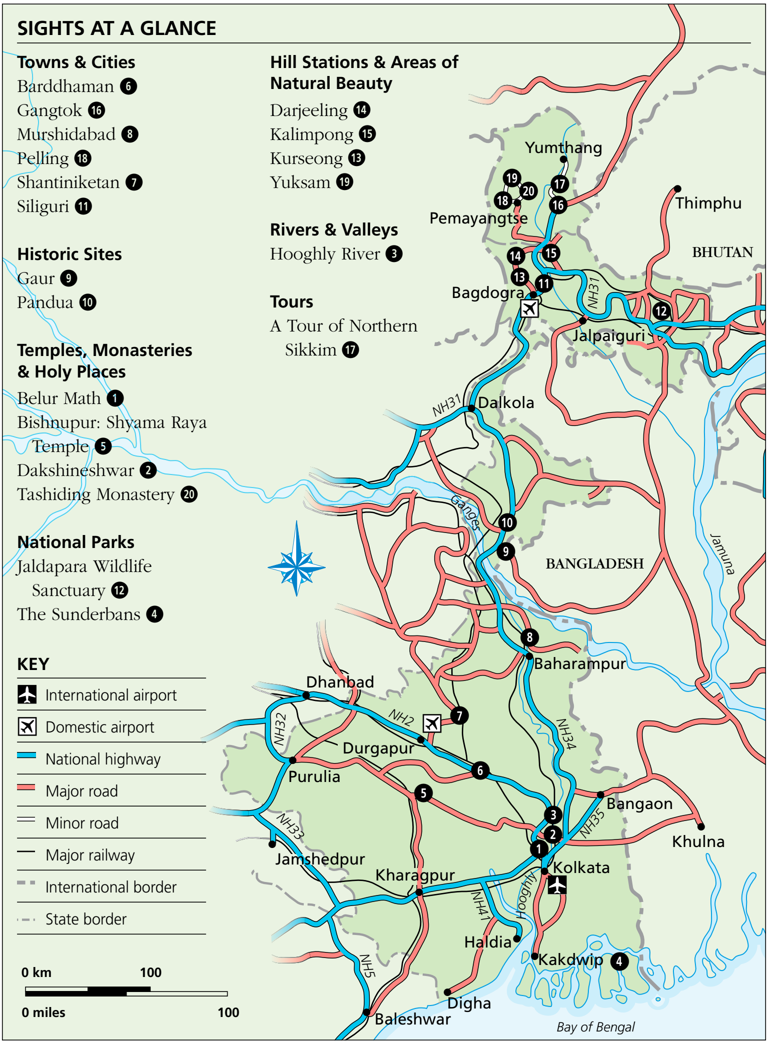
Tantra
The Park Hotel, Park St.
Tel *(033) 2249 9000.*

Tollygunge Club
120, Deshpran Sasmal Rd.
Tel *(033) 2473 4741.*

WEST BENGAL & SIKKIM



West Bengal has three distinct types of landscape. In the west, the red soil gives its rich colour to the terracotta temples of Bishnupur. The Ganges Delta in lower Bengal has dense, tangled mangrove swamps where Royal Bengal tigers roam, while the charming, Raj-era hill stations of Darjeeling and Kalimpong are located in the foothills of the Himalayas in the northern part of the state. The neighbouring state of Sikkim, which also borders Bhutan, Nepal and China, is ringed by mountains. In its tranquil valleys, richly ornamented Buddhist monasteries stand amidst emerald-green terraced tea fields. The world's third highest mountain, Kanchendzonga (8,603 m/28,209 ft), dominates the skyline and the life of Sikkim's people. The two states have a combined population of 81 million.


Yumthang
Thimphu
BHUTAN
Pemayangtse
Bagdogra
Jalpaiguri
NH31
Dalkola
Ganges
BANGLADESH
Jamuna
Baharampur
NH34
Dhanbad
NH2
NH32
Durgapur
Purulia
Bangaon
NH35
Khulna
NH33
Jamshedpur
Kharagpur
Kolkata
NH41
Hooghly
Haldia
Kakdwip
NH5
Digha
Baleshwar
Bay of Bengal

SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

Towns & Cities
- Barddhaman ⑥
- Gangtok ⑯
- Murshidabad ⑧
- Pelling ⑱
- Shantiniketan ⑦
- Siliguri ⑪

Historic Sites
- Gaur ⑨
- Pandua ⑩

Temples, Monasteries & Holy Places
- Belur Math ①
- Bishnupur: Shyama Raya Temple ⑤
- Dakshineshwar ②
- Tashiding Monastery ⑳

National Parks
- Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary ⑫
- The Sunderbans ④

Hill Stations & Areas of Natural Beauty
- Darjeeling ⑭
- Kalimpong ⑮
- Kurseong ⑬
- Yuksam ⑲

Rivers & Valleys
- Hooghly River ③

Tours
- A Tour of Northern Sikkim ⑰

KEY
- ✈ International airport
- ☒ Domestic airport
- ▬ National highway
- ▬ Major road
- ═ Minor road
- ─ Major railway
- ▬ ▬ International border
- ‐ · ‐ State border

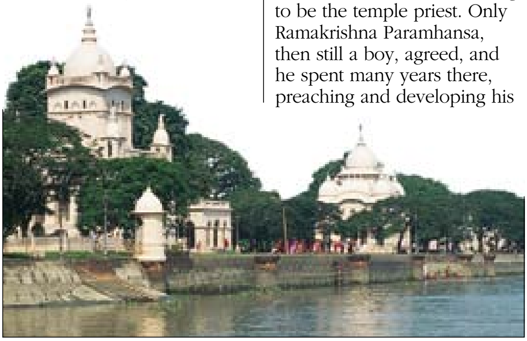
0 km 100
0 miles 100

◁ Image of the ten-armed goddess Durga, elaborately adorned for the Durga Puja festival

Belur Math ❶

Howrah district. 10 km (6 miles) N of Kolkata. 🚌 🚆 *or taxi from Kolkata.* ○ *daily. Conservative dress appreciated.*

Just outside Kolkata, on the west bank of the Hooghly river, is Belur Math, the headquarters of the Ramakrishna Mission. The order was established in 1886 by the dynamic, reformist Hindu crusader, Swami Vivekananda *(see p615)*, Ramakrishna Paramhansa's foremost disciple. The modern temple within the sprawling complex was built in 1938 and embodies Ramakrishna's philosophy, based on the unity of all faiths. The ground plan is in the shape of a cross, the windows have arches reminiscent of Mughal buildings, the gate shows Buddhist influence, and Hindu architectural motifs decorate the façade. Smaller temples and dormitories for the monks belonging to the order surround it. The place is spotlessly clean, and the atmosphere contemplative and calm. Today, the Mission has centres across the world.



Belur Math, on the west bank of the Hooghly river

Dakshineshwar ❷

24 Parganas district. 12 km (8 miles) N of Kolkata. 🚌 🚆 *or taxi from Kolkata.* ○ *daily. Conservative dress appreciated.*

The curved *bangaldar* roof of the Kali temple, Dakshineshwar

North of Belur Math, on the east bank of the Hooghly river, stands the temple of Dakshineshwar, one of Bengal's most popular pilgrimage spots. The temple, built in 1855 by a rich and pious widow, Rani Rashmoni, was initially opposed by orthodox religious interests as she was not a Brahmin (the highest Indian caste). No Brahmin was therefore willing to be the temple priest. Only Ramakrishna Paramhansa, then still a boy, agreed, and he spent many years there, preaching and developing his philosophy of the essential oneness of all faiths. His room in the temple complex is still preserved in its original state.

The impressive whitewashed temple is set on a high plinth and topped by nine cupolas. The roof, with its line of rounded cornices, stands out impressively against the sky. Inside the sanctum is an image of Bhabatarini, an incarnation of the goddess Kali.

Within the large compound, strung along the river bank, are 12 smaller temples, each dedicated to the god Shiva. Crowds of pilgrims visit the Dakshineshwar temple daily, lending the sprawling temple complex a cheerful, bustling atmosphere.

Hooghly River ❸

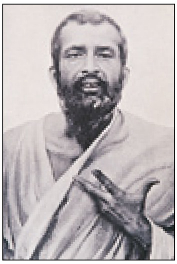
Hooghly district. 24 km (15 miles) N from Kolkata to Shrirampur. 🚆 🚌 🚆 *River cruises.* ℹ *Babu Ghat (near Eden Gardens) or Tourist Office, (033) 2248 7302.*

When the Ganges enters the lower Gangetic Plains in West Bengal, the river breaks up into many channels. The main distributary, the Hooghly (now Hugli), flows 260 km (162 miles) from Murshidabad to the Bay of Bengal.

Between the 15th and 19th centuries, this easily navigable river attracted Dutch, French, Portuguese, Danish and British traders. The settlements they established transformed the

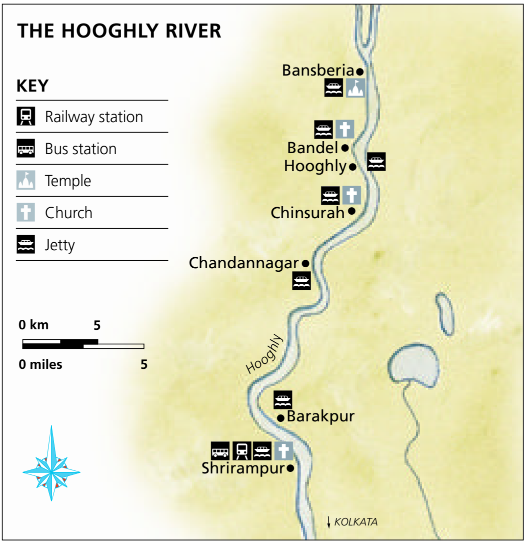
RAMAKRISHNA PARAMHANSA (1836–86)

Ramakrishna, one of modern India's greatest spiritual teachers, was born into a poor family of priests in 1836. He became a priest at Dakshineshwar, where he began a life of prayer and meditation. His philosophy was lucid – there is an inherent truth in all religions and a simple life is a pure life. A mystic who claimed to speak directly to God, he could explain complex and abstruse theological issues in the simplest language, which appealed to the poor and rich alike. His teachings were carried to the USA and to Britain by his main disciple Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902) who set up many Ramakrishna Mission centres abroad for education and religious studies.



Ramakrishna Paramhansa

Visitors praying at the Church of Our Lady of Bandel

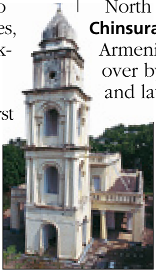


river banks into a mini Europe – the remnants of which can be best explored today by taking one of the river cruises.

Up river from Kolkata is **Shrirampur** (Serampore), a Danish colony until 1845. Dr William Carey, the first Baptist missionary in India *(see p279)*, set up the earliest printing press here in 1799 and translated the Bible into several Indian languages, including Bengali, marking the beginnings of modern Bengali prose. He also founded the first theological college, today Shrirampur College, in 1805. Its library houses a priceless collection of 18th- and 19th-century books.

On the east bank is **Barakpur** (Barrackpore), the site of the British viceroys' once gracious country house. The mansion, locally referred to as Lat Bagan ("Governor's or Lord's Garden"), was built by Lord Wellesley, the governor general in the early 19th century.

Chandannagar (Chandernagore), a French settlement from 1673 until 1952, still retains a Gallic ambience. The public benches on the waterfront (previously Quai Dupleix) are replicas of those found in Paris parks. The elegant Administrator's Residence, built in the 18th century, is now the Institut de Chandernagore, a library and museum, and contains an interesting collection of French -era documents and artifacts. The Église du Sacré Coeur has a statue of Joan of Arc and a Lourdes grotto.



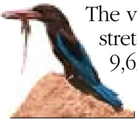
Armenian Church, Chinsurah

North of Chandannagar is **Chinsurah** (Chunchura), an Armenian settlement, taken over by the Dutch in 1625 and later by the British. The Armenian Church was built in 1697, though the steeple was added a century later. The town of **Hooghly**, to the north, has an impressive *imambara* (mosque) built in 1836. Further upriver is **Bandel**, founded by the Portuguese in 1580. The Church of Our Lady of Bandel, consecrated in 1599, is the oldest in Eastern India. After being refaced in granite, it has, however, lost some of its charm. People of all faiths still pray at the statue of Our Lady of Happy Voyages, an icon with an interesting history. In 1632, while the city was being sacked by the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan, the icon was lost in the river, but later reappeared miraculously on the banks in front of the church.

Further north is **Bansberia**, site of several terracotta temples. The Ananta Vasudeva Temple, built in 1679, has a panel of warriors carved above the entrance, while the Hanseshwari Temple, built in 1814, has a fabulous array of Kremlin-like onion domes and an elaborately carved façade.

The French Administrator's Residence in Chandannagar

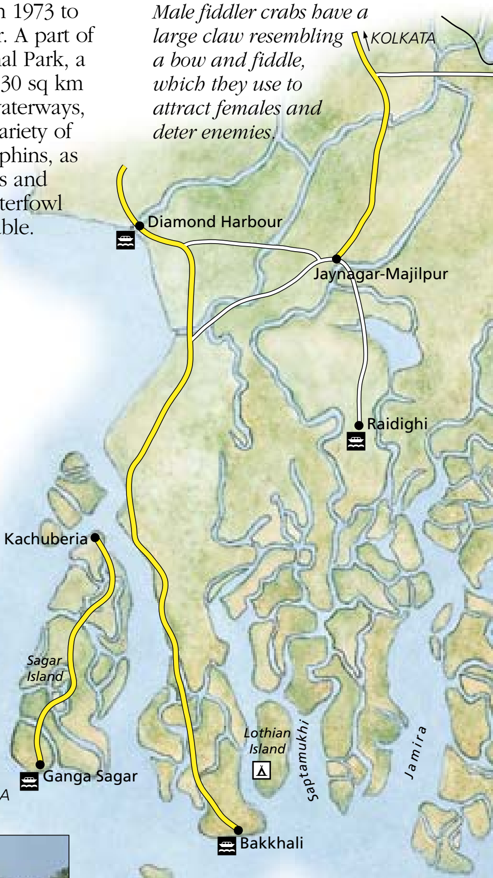
The Sunderbans ④



White breasted kingfisher

The vast Ganges-Brahmaputra Delta stretching into Bangladesh, covers 9,630 sq km (3,718 sq miles) and has the world's largest tropical mangrove forest. The Sundarbans Reserve, which spreads across 2,585 sq km (998 sq miles), created within the delta was declared a Tiger Reserve in 1973 to protect the endangered Royal Bengal tiger. A part of the reserve houses the Sundarbans National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site covering 1,330 sq km (513 sq miles). The intricate network of waterways, creeks and alluvial islands abounds in a variety of marine life, including crustaceans and dolphins, as well as reptiles such as Olive Ridley turtles and estuarine crocodiles. Birds such as the waterfowl can be seen here. Guided boats are available.

Fiddler Crabs
Male fiddler crabs have a large claw resembling a bow and fiddle, which they use to attract females and deter enemies.



Mangrove Forests
Renowned for their variety of mangroves, the Sunderbans were once dominated by the sundari *tree* (Heritiera fomes)*, now nearly extinct due to rampant timber poaching. Mangroves have ingeniously adapted to flooding and salinity, using breathing roots or pneumatophores.*

Country Boats
Small rowboats, available from Sajnakhali, take visitors along the reserve's many waterways. These craft are preferable to the noisier motorboats that tend to scare away wildlife, especially the rich variety of waterfowl.

MORE TO SEE

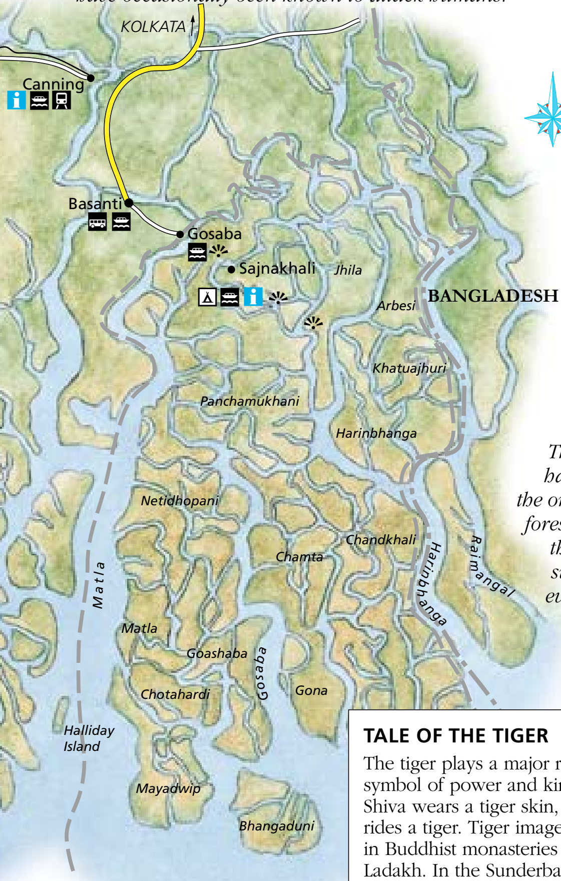
The western boundary of the Sunderbans boasts a number of popular beaches and reserves, all of which can be reached by road or boat. **Ganga Sagar** on Sagar Island, is the spot where millions of pilgrims gather for the annual Ganga Sagar Mela *(see p295)* during Makar Sankranti in January. **Diamond Harbour** is a popular picnic spot, while **Bakkhali** and **Digha** have beautiful beaches and are popular resorts. Bakkhali is also a haven for birdlife.

Estuarine or Saltwater Crocodile

Saltwater crocodiles, known as "salties", grow up to a length of 8 m (26 ft). They feed on small mammals and have occasionally been known to attack humans.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

24 Parganas district. 168 km (104 miles) SE of Kolkata. 🚉 *Canning, 45 km (28 miles) NW of Sajnakhali, the entry point to the Tiger Reserve.* 🚌 *Basanti, 30 km (19 miles) NW of Sajnakhali.* ⛴ *from Canning or Basanti via Gosaba to Sajnakhali.* ℹ *For bookings contact the Field Director, (03218) 255 280. Permits are available at the Tourist Dept, Kolkata, (033) 2248 7302.* ○ *Nov–Mar.* ✋ ☞ *compulsory.* 🚣 *Rowboats with boatmen are available from Sajnakhali.*


KOLKATA
Canning
Basanti
Gosaba
Sajnakhali
Jhila
Arbesi
BANGLADESH
Khatuajhuri
Panchamukhani
Harinbhanga
Netidhopani
Chandkhali
Chamta
Matla
Harinbhanga
Raimangal
Matla
Goashaba
Gosaba
Chotahardi
Gona
Halliday Island
Mayadwip
Bhangaduni
0 km 10
0 miles 10

Royal Bengal Tiger

The Indian stretch of the Sunderbans has 245 Royal Bengal tigers. They are the only tigers known to live in mangrove forests and have adapted remarkably to the inhospitable environment. Expert swimmers, they feed on fish, and are even believed to survive on salt water.

KEY

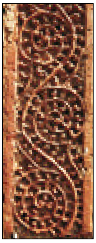
- 🚉 Railway station
- 🚌 Bus station
- ⛴ Jetty
- ℹ Tourist information
- ⛺ Accommodation
- ✳ Viewpoint
- ═ Major road
- ═ Minor road
- ‐ ‐ Park boundary
- ·‐ International border

TALE OF THE TIGER

The tiger plays a major role in India's cultural history as a symbol of power and kingship. In Hindu iconography, Shiva wears a tiger skin, while the fearsome Goddess Durga rides a tiger. Tiger images can also be seen in vibrant murals in Buddhist monasteries in Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh and Ladakh. In the Sunderbans, ritual offerings are made to the forest deity, Banbibi, to seek protection from the tiger. Yet statistics belie the tiger's mythic status. In 1900, India's tiger population was about 40,000; by 1972 it had fallen to 1,800. Alarmed, the Indian government launched Project Tiger. Ever since, numbers have grown substantially and India now has between 2,750 and 3,500 tigers (about 60 per cent of the world's tiger population), protected in 28 Project Tiger Reserves across the country.

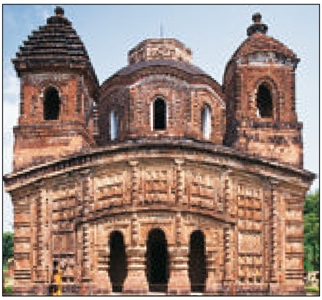
A play re-enacting Banbibi protecting a mother and child from the tiger

Bishnupur: Shyama Raya Temple ❺

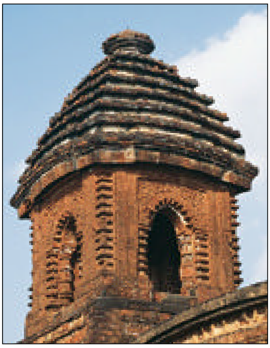


Creeper motif

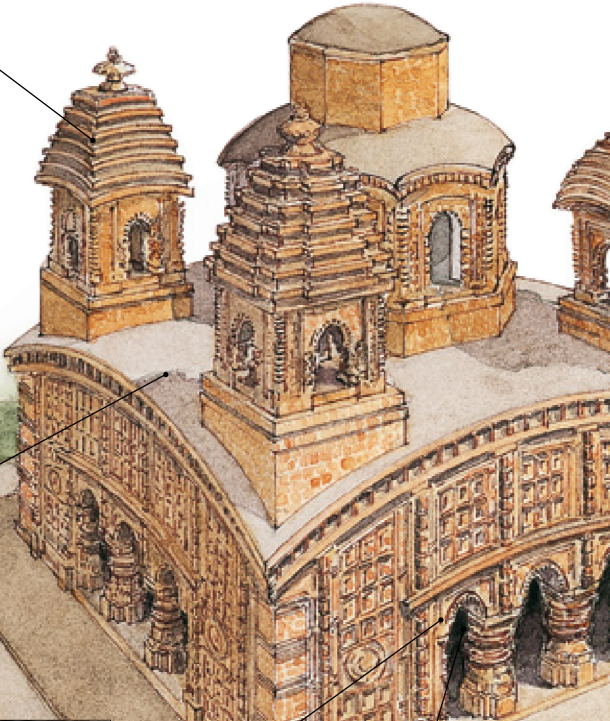
Bishnupur, capital of the Mallabhumi kingdom between the 17th and the mid-18th centuries, is renowned for its elaborately adorned terracotta temples, made of the local red clay. The most imposing of these is the Shyama Raya Temple, built in 1643. It is richly decorated with scenes from Lord Krishna's life as well as episodes taken from the epic *Ramayana (see p27)*. Other motifs in the temple include scenes of hunting, boating and military processions.



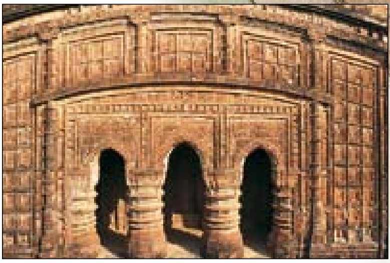
Front façade of the Shyama Raya Temple



Shikharas
The design of the five spires is inspired by the temple tradition of nearby Orissa (see p306).



The cornice echoes the contours of thatched village huts.



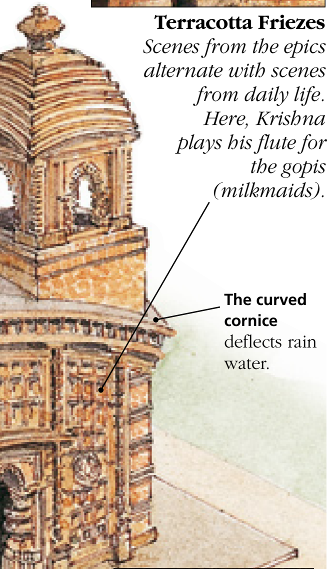
Arched Façade
The arches, supported by squat, ornamented pillars, lead to a vaulted corridor.

The inner chamber, called *thakurbari* (god's house), has a finely decorated altar at one end.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

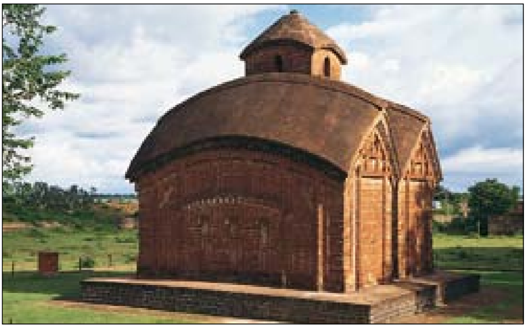
Bankura district. 152 km (94miles) NW of Kolkata.
👥 *128,811.* 🚆 🚌 ○ *daily.*
🎭 *Rasa Festival (Aug).*

Terracotta Friezes
Scenes from the epics alternate with scenes from daily life. Here, Krishna plays his flute for the gopis (milkmaids).



The curved cornice deflects rain water.

Interior Arch
This doorway has rich carvings of creepers, foliage and flowers.



The twin hut-like roofs of the Keshta Raya Temple, Bishnupur

Exploring Bishnupur's Temples

The terracotta temples of Bishnupur are scattered over a 3-km (2-mile) radius, and stand out vividly against the vibrant green and ochre colours of the landscape.

The **Rasa Mancha Temple**, built by the ruler Bir Hambir in the late 16th century, has 108 pillars and a pyramidal roof. Images of Krishna and Radha were displayed here for the Rasa Festival, a tradition that still continues today.

North of the Rasa Mancha Temple is the large **Keshta Raya (Jor Bangla) Temple**, built in 1655. It has joined twin roofs, literally *jor bangla*. Floral motifs, scroll work and scenes from the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* embellish the friezes on the walls.

The **Madan Mohan Temple** further north, was built in 1694 and has friezes showing events from the life of Krishna.

To the northwest, the 19th-century **Shridhara Temple** has nine spires or *nav ratna*. The frieze at the entrance shows the god Shiva dancing.

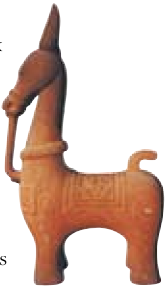
Barddhaman ❻

Barddhaman district. 125 km (78 miles) NW of Kolkata. 🚌
🎭 *Barddhaman Festival (Jan).*

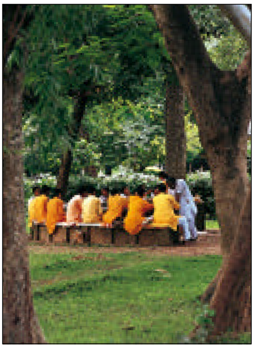
The Rajas of Barddhaman (Burdwan) were once powerful landlords and great patrons of the arts. Today, the small, nondescript town is a gateway to some interesting sites. The rajas built several temples at **Kalna**, 50 km (31 miles) to the east, in the 18th and 19th centuries. The Shiva temple, with 108 minor shrines, is the most impressive. **Nabadwip**, 20 km (12 miles) to the north, was the birthplace of Sri Chaitanya (1486–1533), founder of the movement that revived the Krishna cult *(see p179)*. It is a charming town, with a few old houses built of the narrow red brick, unique to pre-British Bengal. Pilgrims singing *kirtans* throng the Gauranga Temple. Nearby, in **Mayapur**, is the large and modern Chandrodaya Temple, headquarters of ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness).

BANKURA HORSES

Bankura district's vibrant tradition of folk art includes a variety of clay handicrafts. The district's most famous product is the Bankura horse, a very stylized figure with a long neck and elongated ears, in warm terracotta colours. Artisans have used the same techniques of hollow clay moulding and firing for generations. Sizes vary from minute, palm-sized toys to gigantic creations over 1 m (3 ft) high. The horses are votive figures and are usually placed in front of local deities.



Bankura clay horse



Students attending open air classes at Visva Bharati University

Shantiniketan ❼

Birbhum district. 213 km (132 miles) NW of Kolkata. 🚉 *Bolpur, 3 km (2 miles) S of Shantiniketan, then rickshaw.* 🚌 *Bolpur.* 🎉 *Kendulimela (Jan), Paush Mela (Dec).*

Rabindranath Tagore founded the serene settlement of Shantiniketan in 1921. His aim was to establish an institution that followed the traditional Indian *gurukul* system of instruction where gurus would teach their disciples, while sitting on the grass under shady trees. The university also stressed the importance of community living, and specialized in all branches of the arts and humanities, with a special emphasis on Bengali culture.

Today known as the **Visva Bharati University**, its structure is more conventional, but certain traditions, such as open air lessons, remain sacrosanct. The place is still hallowed ground for admirers of Tagore.

In the campus is the Uttarayan Complex, where the poet lived and worked for many years. Other departments include **Kala** (Fine Arts) **Bhavan**, **Sangeet** (Music) **Bhavan** and **China Bhavan**, specializing in Chinese studies. Shantiniketan's association with contemporary Indian art is evident by the works on display by many of the country's leading artists, such as Binode Bihari Mukherjee (1904–80), Nandalal Bose (1882–1966) and Ram Kinkar Baij (1910–80). The **Vichitra Museum** has memorabilia from the poet's life, including his paintings, developed from the sketches he made in the margins of his written work. Excellent performances of Rabindra Sangeet (songs written and set to music by Tagore) can be heard at the campus every evening.

The village of **Kenduli**, nearby, is the birthplace of the medieval poet, Jayadeva, who composed the *Gita Govinda,* a paean to Krishna. Every year in January the Bauls, wandering minstrels known for their soulful songs, gather here for Kendulimela, a festival where they sing without pause for three days.

🏛 **Visva Bharati University**
Tel *(03463) 25 2531.* ○ *Thu–Tue.* 🎉 📷̸ **Vichitra Museum** ○ *daily.* 📷̸ 🎉

Murshidabad ❽

Murshidabad district. 200 km (124 miles) N of Kolkata. 🚉 🚌

The former capital of the nawabs of Bengal, Murshidabad lies in the green and gold Bengal countryside. This city, on the banks of the Bhagirathi river, was founded in 1704 by Nawab Murshid Quli Khan, governor of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb. His grave lies beneath the stairs of the impressive **Katra Mosque**, built in 1724 along the lines of Kartalab Khan's Mosque at Dhaka. The nawab chose this site because he wanted the footsteps of the faithful to pass over him.

Hazarduari ("A Thousand Doors"), the nawabs' palace, was built in the 1830s by General Duncan McLeod of the Bengal Engineers who,

The grand façade of Hazarduari Palace in Murshidabad

RABINDRANATH TAGORE (1861–1941)

Tagore was India's ultimate Renaissance man and his influence is still felt in all branches of the arts, particularly in Bengal. Born in 1861 into the rich and cultivated Tagore family *(see p280)*, he became a poet, lyricist, novelist, short story writer, essayist, painter, choreographer, actor, dramatist and singer – as well as the author of India's national anthem. Following the translation of his poem *Gitanjali* into English by WB Yeats, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1913. He was knighted by the British government, but returned the honour in protest against the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh *(see p56)*. Mahatma Gandhi called him Gurudev ("Great Teacher"). Tagore died in August 1941, but his memory is still deeply revered by Bengalis and his portraits, if not his books, occupy pride of place in nearly all middle-class Bengali homes.

Nobel laureate Tagore, in 1930

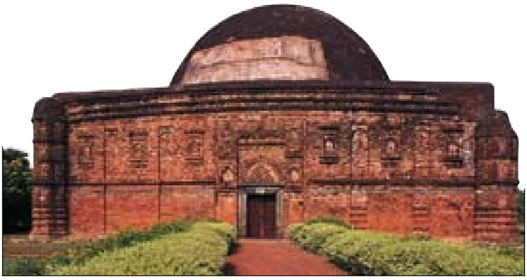
inspired by Italian Baroque, gave it a banquet hall lined with mirrors and a striking circular Durbar Hall. The palace is now a museum with many fine exhibits, such as a gigantic chandelier, presented by Queen Victoria, which was hung directly over the nawabs' solid silver throne. The library has over 10,000 books, among them some beautiful illuminated Korans. Other items on display are a motley collection of arms and armour, including a cannon which was fired at the crucial Battle of Plassey in 1757 *(see p52)*, when Robert Clive defeated the nawab, Siraj-ud-Daulah – a battle which eventually paved the way for the establishment of the British Empire in India. The town declined after Kolkata grew in importance.

🏛 **Hazarduari Museum**
○ *Sat–Thu.* 🎫 ⊘

Gaur ⑨

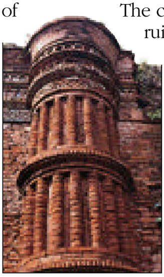
Malda district. 325 km (202 miles) N of Kolkata. 🚆 *Malda, 16 km (10 miles) N of Gaur, then taxi or bus.* 🚌
Monuments ○ *daily.*

The impressive ruins of Gaur are an indication of its former glory, when the city caught the imagination of the second Mughal emperor Humayun who called it Jinnatabad ("Abode of Paradise"). This abandoned city, spread over 52 sq kms (20 sq miles), dates to the 15th and 16th centuries, though the area has a much older history. The Buddhist Pala kings ruled here from the 8th century onwards until they were ousted by the Senas, Bengal's last Hindu dynasty, in the 12th century. Thereafter, it was ruled by a series of Muslim sultans, including the Ilyas Shahi dynasty. Gaur was sacked by Sher Shah Sur *(see p79)* in 1539, and ravaged by plague in 1575, after which it became part of the Mughal Empire.


The carved terracotta façade of the Eklakhi Mausoleum, Pandua

The Dakhil Darwaza in Gaur, built with small, red bricks

The oldest structure is the **Sagar Dighi**, a large tank built in the 12th century. On the eastern bank of the Bhagirathi river are the ramparts of a fort, within which is a brick wall that once enclosed a palace. The northern gate, the **Dakhil Darwaza**, built in 1459, has a soaring entrance archway and corners embellished with carving. To its north are the remains of **Sona Mosque**, built in 1526, and Gaur's largest mosque. Other interesting buildings include the many-arched **Qadam Rasul Mosque**, built in 1530 to enshrine an impression of the Prophet Mohammad's footprint, the brick **Tantipara Mosque** and the **Lattan Mosque** with remnants of blue, green, yellow and white tiles. The **Gumti Darwaza**, the eastern entrance to the city of Gaur, still stands.


The Gumti Darwaza, Gaur

Pandua ⑩

Malda district. 360 km (224 miles) N of Kolkata. 🚆 *Malda, 18 km (11 miles) S of Pandua, then taxi or bus.* 🚌

The creeper-covered ruins of Pandua lie on either side of a 10-km (6-mile) stretch of an old paved brick road. In 1353, Pandua replaced Gaur as the capital of Bengal's Muslim rulers. At the northern end, the 14th century **Adina Mosque**, built by Sultan Sikandar Shah, imitates the design of the great mosque at Damascus. Once the largest mosque in India, it contains Sikandar Shah's tomb. Further south is the early 15th-century **Eklakhi Mausoleum** which contains the grave of Sultan Jalal-ud-din. This stucture, built at great cost, was one of the earliest square brick tombs to be constructed in Bengal. The octagonal inner chamber, unusually, has an image of Ganesha, the Hindu elephant god, carved over the entrance archway. The **Qutb Shahi Mosque**, to the south, is sometimes called the "Golden Mosque" as its minarets were once topped with yellow tiles. It was built in 1582 by Sultan Makhdum Shah, whose grave lies adjacent to the mosque.

Tea plantations lining the road between Bagdogra and Siliguri

Siliguri ⑪

Darjeeling district. 79 km (49 miles) SE of Darjeeling. 👥 *470,300.* ✈ *Bagdogra, 12 km (7 miles) W of Siliguri, then taxi or bus.* 🚆 *New Jalpaiguri, 60 km (37 miles) SE of Siliguri, then taxi or bus.* 🚌 ℹ *Tourist Office, Siliguri, (0353) 251 1974.*

Siliguri, situated in the foothills of the Eastern Himalayas, was once a calm, provincial town, with quiet streets and well-equipped shops, where tea planters would come to stock up on provisions. Today, much of the town is a vast trucking depot, though it has some lively bazaars, such as the one on **Tenzing Norgay Road**. The Tibetan woollens on sale here are good bargains, and cane furniture, a speciality of the area, is widely available. In the winter, Siliguri hosts international Buddhist conferences and also serves as the transit point for travellers to the Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary.

Environs

Clustered close to Siliguri are **New Jalpaiguri**, the railhead for the area, and **Bagdogra**, which has the airport. Along with Siliguri, these towns act as gateways to the hill stations of Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong, as well as to Bhutan and Sikkim. The drive between these towns goes past beautiful green acres of tea plantations.

Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary ⑫

Jalpaiguri district. 200 km (78 miles) E of Siliguri. 🚆 *Madarihat, the entry point, then taxi.* 🚌 *Madarihat.* ℹ *For general enquiries and bookings for the Hollong Forest Lodge contact Tourist Office, Siliguri, (0353) 251 1974.* ○ *Oct–May.* 🎫 📷 *extra charges.* 🐘 *Hollong.*

The region around the Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary, in the richly forested Dooars Valley, was once the hunting ground of the kings of Bhutan. Today, it is one of the biggest reserve forests in West Bengal, covering an area of 216 sq km (83 sq miles). Established in 1941,

THE DARJEELING HIMALAYAN RAILWAY (DHR)

The most attractive way to travel to Darjeeling from Siliguri is by the “toy train”, officially known as the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway (DHR). The narrow gauge train gasps its way up from the railhead at New Jalpaiguri to Darjeeling, 2,128 m (6,982 ft) above sea level. The journey takes nine hours and the track rises a total of 2,088 m (6,850 ft) over its length of 80 km (50 miles). Constructed between 1879 and 1881, the train line was hailed as an engineering masterpiece and is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The line makes wide loops as it zigzags up the hill, requiring the train to backtrack for certain stretches. Each of the steam engines, one of which dates to 1892, hauls up three carriages. If nine hours sounds daunting, try journeying to Kurseong by train and taking a bus to Darjeeling, or travelling only the last stretch (from Ghoom to Darjeeling) by train. Tickets for the journey are available at New Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling stations. The train leaves both stations at 9am and 3pm during the peak season. For more details *see p777.*

The toy train pulled by steam engines

the reserve sprawls over lush, deciduous forests and dense scrubland, with the Torsa river flowing through it. This is one of the few places in India where the great Indian one-horned rhinoceros *(see p330)* can be easily spotted. About 50 of these magnificent animals live in the sanctuary, protected from poachers who hunt them for their horns, which are believed to be powerful aphrodisiacs. The sanctuary is home to various other rare and endangered species as well, including the leopard, tiger, hispid hare, hogbadger, and sloth bear.

Large numbers of hog deer, spotted deer, barking deer and gaur (Indian bison) can also be seen at Jaldapara. Bird species include the lesser pied hornbill, and the Bengal florican with its mottled and streaked plumage. In addition, there are eight species of freshwater turtles in Jaldapara's ponds.

The northern part of the sanctuary, known as Totopara, is located along the banks of the Torsa river. It is home to the Toto tribe, now only 950 strong, whose members have consistently refused to succumb to the comforts of civilization.

A delightful way to explore the Jaldapara Sanctuary is to take an early morning elephant safari through the park. The elephants belong to the forest department and spend their entire lives within the confines of the sanctuary. Quite often, the elephants taking visitors on safaris are accompanied by their calves, which gambol along closely beside them. The many waterholes in the sanctuary, where animals come to drink in the evenings, are excellent spots for wildlife sightings.

The elegant, colonial-style **Hollong Forest Lodge** within the sanctuary offers food and accommodation.

Jungle fowl, found in large numbers at Jaldapara

Kurseong ⑬

Darjeeling district. 31 km (19 miles) N of Siliguri. 🚉 🚌

Halfway between Siliguri and Darjeeling, on the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway line, secluded Kurseong has a quiet charm. It is smaller than Darjeeling, with a milder climate because of its lower altitude. Set amid tea gardens, with lush vegetation and a picturesque lake, Kurseong is known for its natural beauty. According to local legend, the place gets its name from *kurson-rip*, a beautiful wild orchid found in the area.

Kurseong is a walkers' paradise. The trek from **Mirik** to Kurseong *(see p303)*, which takes about eight hours, runs through tea estates, orange orchards, cardamom plantations and small villages, and provides spectacular views of the valley. Similarly, the five-hour walk to **Ghoom** is also beautiful, winding along a ridge which runs through a thick, but well-shaded, forest.

Gaur (Indian bison) roaming the scrubland at Jaldapara

FESTIVALS OF WEST BENGAL & SIKKIM

Saraswati Puja *pandal*

Ganga Sagar Mela *(mid-Jan)*, Sagar Island. Thousands of pilgrims assemble for a fair, and a dip at dawn at the point where the Ganges enters the sea.

Saraswati Puja *(Jan/Feb)*. Saraswati is the Goddess of Learning and her image is always dressed in pale yellow. School and college girls dress in yellow too, and place their books at the feet of the goddess during this festival, celebrated all over Bengal.

International Flower Festival *(Apr/May)*, Gangtok. Held at the height of the flowering season, this festival showcases Sikkim's rare orchids, rhododendrons and other beautiful flowers.

Saga Dawa (May), Gangtok. Sacred scriptures are carried from monasteries through the streets by stately processions of lamas during this festival, which celebrates the Buddha's birth, his enlightenment and his attainment of nirvana.

Durga Puja *(Sep/Oct)* *(see p281)*.

Burra Din *(25 Dec)*, Kolkata. Otherwise known as Christmas, Burra Din is celebrated by Christians and non-Christians alike. Kolkata's main shopping streets are lit up and little plastic pine trees, decorations and thickly-iced fruit cakes are on sale at every local market.

A view of Darjeeling with Mount Kanchendzonga in the background

Darjeeling ⑭

Darjeeling district. 79 km (49 miles) NW of Siliguri. 👥 *107,600.* ✈ *Bagdogra, 90 km (56 miles) S of city centre, then bus or taxi.* 🚉 🚌 ℹ *Government Tourist Office, Chowrasta, (0354) 225 4050.*

The name Darjeeling derives from the monastery of Dorje Ling (meaning Place of the Thunderbolt) that once stood on Observatory Hill. The British chose this sunny, west-facing ledge of the Himalayan foothills to build a sanatorium in the mid-19th century. Subsequently, it became Bengal's summer capital and the government would move up here when the plains grew too hot. Today, much of Darjeeling's Raj splendour is still in evidence and contrasts with its Tibetan, Nepali and Bengali character.

This picturesque town squats rather precariously on the hillside, and has three main thoroughfares, **Hill Cart Road**, **Laden Road** and **The Mall**. The Mall is the hub of Darjeeling, leading to the crowded **Chowrasta** (cross-roads), lined with bookshops such as the **Oxford Book and Stationery**, which has a wide range of books on India. Other shops sell teas, curios and souvenirs. Vendors offer sets of bright, out-of-focus postcards and guided tours. A rather jolting ten-minute pony ride round the Chowrasta is also available.

Nearby is the **Bhutia Busty Monastery**, built in 1879. The cult text, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, was found in the library attached to this shrine, and was translated into English in 1927. The murals in the temple are beautiful – but visitors should ask for permission before entering.

The presence of **Kanchendzonga**, (8,598 m/28,209 ft), India's highest peak *(see p302)*, dominates the town. Some of the best views of the entire snow-clad range of the Eastern Himalayan peaks can be enjoyed from the windy, prayer flag-lined **Observatory Hill**.

At **North Point**, in the northwest corner of Darjeeling, is India's first passenger rope-way, a cable car connecting Darjeeling to **Singla Bazaar** in the Little Rangeet Valley. The hour-long journey provides a good view of the mountains and the tea gardens that cling to the sides and bottom of the valley.

The **Himalayan Mountaineering Institute** is to the south of North Point on Birch Hill. Its Mountaineering Museum has a fascinating contour model of the Himalayan peaks, while the Everest Museum gives a history of the various attempts to climb Everest and other Himalayan peaks. The **Himalayan Zoo** is adjacent, and is famous for its high altitude fauna, including snow leopards, Siberian tigers and red pandas. To the south, the **Lloyds Botanical Gardens** are home to an interesting and varied collection of Himalayan flora – the hundreds of species of orchids in its Orchid House

The carved and painted façade of the Yiga Choeling Monastery

are particularly lovely. The town also has some well-preserved colonial churches. **St Andrew's Church**, west of Observatory Hill, was built in 1843, though the clock tower was added later. **St Columba's Kirk**, near the train station, was built in 1894 and is worth a visit for its magnificent stained-glass windows.

Some of the best preserved examples of Raj-era grandeur in India are Darjeeling's hotels and clubs. Just above Observatory Hill is the rattan-and-chintz-decorated **Windamere Hotel** *(see p700)*. Open fires heat the sedate lounge where, to the accompaniment of a string quartet playing genteel tunes, maids in starched aprons serve sandwiches and Darjeeling tea to visitors and guests.

Ghosts of colonial planters can be sensed at the **Planters' Club**. Old hunting prints hang on the walls and visitors can sit in front of coal fires while bearers, who must have been robust young men in 1947, serve drinks in slow motion.

Bhutia Busty Monastery
Chowrasta. ○ *daily.*

Himalayan Mountaineering Institute
Birch Hill Park, entrance on Jawahar Rd West. ***Tel*** *(0354) 225 4268.* ○ *daily.* ● *Thu.* 🖐 📷 *extra charges.*

Himalayan Zoo
○ *Fri–Wed.* 🖐

Environs

Those interested in Buddhism should visit the **Yiga Choeling Monastery**, 10 km (6 miles) south of Darjeeling, established in 1875 by the Gelugpa (Yellow Hat) sect. The monastery has murals of Buddhist deities and beautiful, if faded, frescoes in the prayer hall. Ask for permission before entering the shrine. **Tiger Hill**, 11 km (7 miles) south of Darjeeling, offers spectacular views of the mighty **Everest** (8,848 m/29,029 ft) and other peaks in the Eastern Himalayan Range, including **Makalu** (8,475 m/27,805ft) and **Janu** (7,710 m/25,295 ft), as they catch the first rays of the sun. Early risers can take a pre-dawn drive to Tiger Hill (about 45 minutes in a jeep).

Women tea pickers in northern Bengal's tea gardens, around Darjeeling

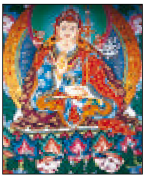
Senchal Lake, 5 km (3 miles) west of Tiger Hill, is a lovely mountain lake, but tends to be crowded with local tourists. For visitors who come to Darjeeling during the plucking season (April to November), the **Happy Valley Tea Estate**, just beyond the town, is a pleasant tea garden to visit.

Yiga Choeling Monastery
○ *daily. Donations welcome.*

Kalimpong ⑮

Darjeeling district. 51 km (32 miles) E of Darjeeling. 👥 *43,000.* 🚌

Kalimpong was once part of Sikkimese and then Bhutanese territory, before it became part of British India in the 19th century. It was at the head of the ancient trade route to Tibet and still has the feel of a frontier town. Its market sells a mix of the exotic and the mundane, from fern shoots to plastic buckets. Memories of the Raj are recalled by the charming stone cottages and the quaint ambience of the **Himalayan Hotel** *(see p700)*, once a family home.

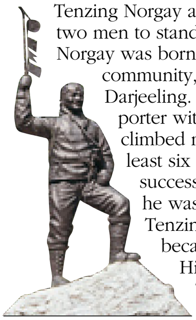


Mural, Zangdopelri Fo-Brang Monastery

The **Thongsa Monastery** is Kalimpong's oldest monastery. It was built in 1692, and is a brisk hour's walk above the town. To the south of the town, the **Zangdopelri Fo-Brang Monastery**, blessed by the Dalai Lama in 1976, has some interesting three-dimensional mandalas.

The town's many nurseries produce a large number of exotic orchids, gladioli, amaryllis lily and cactii. A good one to visit is the **Udai Mani Pradhan Nursery**.

TENZING NORGAY (1914–86)



Statue of Tenzing, Himalayan Mountaineering Institute

Tenzing Norgay and Sir Edmund Hillary were the first two men to stand on top of Mount Everest. Tenzing Norgay was born in Tsa-chu, Nepal, into the Sherpa community, and later made his home in Darjeeling. He undertook his first climb as a porter with a British expedition in 1935 and climbed many mountain peaks, making at least six attempts on Everest before his successful one with Hillary in 1953, when he was the sherpa sirdar (head sherpa). Tenzing won the George Medal and later became the head of Darjeeling's Himalayan Mountaineering Institute. Tenzing's life highlighted the contributions, earlier seldom acknowledged, that sherpas make to Himalayan expeditions.

Stupa at Gangtok's Namgyal Institute of Tibetology

Gangtok ⑯

East Sikkim district. 110 km (68 miles) N of Siliguri. 👥 *29,200.* ✈ *Bagdogra, 117 km (73 miles) S of city centre, then taxi or bus.* 🚉 *Siliguri, 107 km (66 miles) S of city centre, then taxi or bus.* 🚌 ℹ *Sikkim Tourism, MG Marg, (03592) 221 634.* 🎪 *Losar Festival (Feb/Mar), Enchey Monastery Festival (Aug & Dec).* **Travel permits** *required to enter Sikkim* (see p303).

The capital of Sikkim, Gangtok reflects this tiny state's extraordinary ethnic diversity. In the crowded city, which spills precariously down a ridge, Lepchas (the region's original inhabitants) live alongside Tibetans, Bhutias, Nepalis and Indians from the plains. Though now full of modern structures, Gangtok's "Shangrila" aspects can still be experienced in pockets of the city and in its alpine environs.

Until 1975, Sikkim was a kingdom, with the status of an Indian Protectorate. It was ruled by the Chogyals, Buddhists of Tibetan origin, whose dynasty began in the 17th century. However, the British Raj's policies of importing cheap labour from neighbouring Nepal for Sikkim's rice, cardamom and tea plantations drastically changed Sikkim's demography. Soon Nepali Hindus constituted 75 per cent of the state's population. In 1975 the population of Sikkim voted to join the Indian Republic, ending the rule of Palden Thondup Namgyal, the last Chogyal.

At the town's northern edge is the early 20th-century **Enchey Monastery**, whose large prayer hall is full of murals and images, representing the pantheon of Mahayana Buddhist deities *(see p141)*. Enchey's festivals feature spectacular masked dances. At the southern end is the **Namgyal Institute of Tibetology**. Established in 1958, it has a rare collection of medieval Buddhist scriptures, bronzes and embroidered *thangkas*.

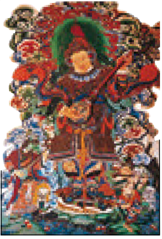
⛩ Enchey Monastery
○ *daily.* 📷 *only allowed outside the monastery.*

🏛 Namgyal Institute of Tibetology
○ *Mon–Sat.* ● *2nd Sat & public hols.* 🖱 **www**.*tibetology.com*

Environs

Saramsa Orchidarium, situated 14 km (9 miles) south of Gangtok, displays many of the 450 orchid species found in Sikkim. They flower from April to May, and again in October.

Rumtek Monastery, 24 km (15 miles) southwest of Gangtok, is the headquarters of the Kagyupa (Black Hat) sect, one of the oldest Tibetan Buddhist sects, and the seat of its head, the Gyalwa Karmapa. The 16th Karmapa fled Tibet in 1959 after the Chinese invasion, and built a replica here of his monastery at Tsurphu in Tibet. Rumtek is an impressive complex, its flat-roofed buildings topped with golden finials, and filled with treasures brought from the monastery in Tibet. Especially splendid is the reliquary *chorten* of the 16th Karmapa, behind the main prayer hall, made of silver and gold and studded with corals, amber and turquoise. Since the 16th Karmapa's death in 1981, however, there have been two claimants to his title (and the monastery's legendary treasures), including one who dramatically escaped from Tibet into India in 2000. Until this dispute is resolved, the armed guards that surround the monastery will remain. Rumtek's main festivals are in February/March and in May/June. **Tshangu Lake**, 40 km (25 miles) northeast of Gangtok, lies at an altitude of 3,780 m (12,402 ft). Visitors to the lake require a special permit from the Sikkim Tourism office in Gangtok.



Guardian of the East at Rumtek

The drive to Tshangu Lake, close to the border with China, is spectacular. The lake is impressive both in spring and summer, when it is surrounded by alpine flowers, and in winter when it's frozen. Visitors can go for rides on the shaggy black yaks that stand docilely on the lake's shores.

⛩ Rumtek Monastery
Tel *(03592) 252 329.* ○ *daily.* 📷 *only allowed outside the monastery.* **www**.rumtek.org

The richly decorated prayer hall of Rumtek Monastery

Flora and Fauna of the Eastern Himalayas

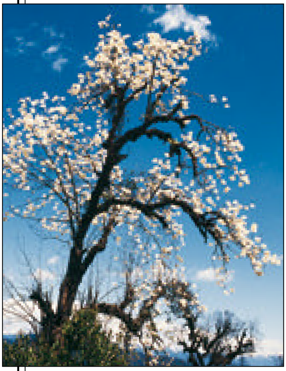
The Eastern Himalayas and their foothills in northern Bengal, Sikkim and the northeastern states are exceptionally rich in rare flora and fauna. This region receives the brunt of the Southwest Monsoon winds as they rise over the Bay of Bengal and hit the Eastern Himalayas with full force, gradually losing impetus as they travel westward. The resulting high moisture content in the air and soil has helped create a habitat of dense virgin forests, fertile hillsides and lush alpine pastures. Among the plants that can be seen in this region are over 50 species of rhododendron, 500 species of orchid and several varieties of primula and bamboo. Typical fauna of the region include yaks, blue sheep and red pandas. Local folklore adds another – the elusive Yeti or Abominable Snowman, glimpsed by many mountaineers.

Primula calderina

The blue poppy (Meconopsis roylei), *which attracted famous 19th-century plant hunters such as Joseph Hooker to the Eastern Himalayas, grows above the tree-line, in alpine pastures where yaks graze.*

The cardiocrinum lily (Cardiocrinum giganteum) *is highly scented. It grows in temperate forests of oak, maple and rhododendron in Sikkim.*

Orchids, *such as this beautiful yellow* Dendrobium *species, festoon the forests of Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Manipur, Nagaland and Sikkim.*



Magnolia campbelli *with its lovely white blossom, blooms profusely in early spring in the temperate forests of the Darjeeling hills and Sikkim.*

The great pied hornbill, (Buceros bicornis) *with its huge yellow and black beak, is common in the forests of Arunachal Pradesh, where several tribes sport its black and white feathers in their headdress.*

The red panda (Ailurus fulgens), *also called the cat-bear, is a bright chestnut colour with white-rimmed ears and a bushy tail. One of its favourite foods is dwarf bamboo which grows in the temperate forests of Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim.*

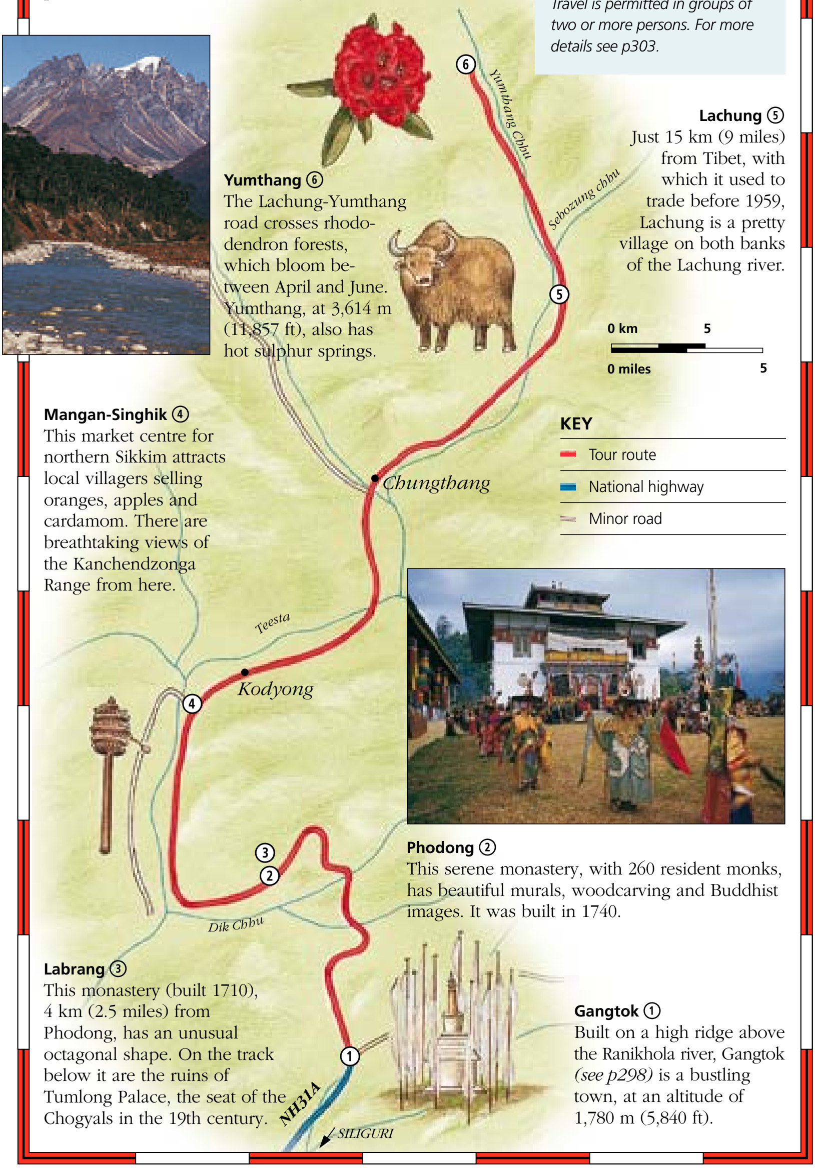
The yak *is greatly prized in Sikkim. It serves as a pack animal, and also provides milk, meat and wool from its shaggy coat.*

A Tour of Northern Sikkim ⑰

An area of unspoilt natural beauty, framed by snowcapped Himalayan peaks, northern Sikkim has only recently been opened to visitors. This tour, following the valley of the Teesta river, goes past tranquil monasteries and villages, through forests of rhododendron, to Yumthang where yaks graze in meadows filled with alpine flowers. Along the way there are charming rural markets, and superb views of the world's third highest peak, Mount Kanchendzonga.

TIPS FOR DRIVERS

Length: *149 km (93 miles).*
Stopping-off points: *The tour can be done in 2–3 days. Phodong, Mangan-Singhik and Lachung are stopping-off points.*
Permits: *Visitors require special permits for this region, issued by the Department of Tourism in Gangtok, (03592) 221 634. Travel is permitted in groups of two or more persons. For more details see p303.*



Yumthang ⑥
The Lachung-Yumthang road crosses rhododendron forests, which bloom between April and June. Yumthang, at 3,614 m (11,857 ft), also has hot sulphur springs.

Lachung ⑤
Just 15 km (9 miles) from Tibet, with which it used to trade before 1959, Lachung is a pretty village on both banks of the Lachung river.

Mangan-Singhik ④
This market centre for northern Sikkim attracts local villagers selling oranges, apples and cardamom. There are breathtaking views of the Kanchendzonga Range from here.

Phodong ②
This serene monastery, with 260 resident monks, has beautiful murals, woodcarving and Buddhist images. It was built in 1740.

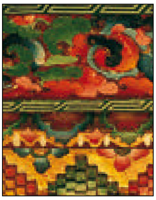
Labrang ③
This monastery (built 1710), 4 km (2.5 miles) from Phodong, has an unusual octagonal shape. On the track below it are the ruins of Tumlong Palace, the seat of the Chogyals in the 19th century.

Gangtok ①
Built on a high ridge above the Ranikhola river, Gangtok *(see p298)* is a bustling town, at an altitude of 1,780 m (5,840 ft).

Pelling ⑱

West Sikkim district. 120 km (75 miles) W of Gangtok. 🚌 *Gezing, 9 km (6 miles) S of city centre, then local bus or taxi.* ℹ *Mount Pandim, Pemayangtse, (03595) 250 573.* 🎪 *Pemayangtse Festival (Feb/Mar).* **Travel permits** *required* (see p303).

Situated on a ridge, at an altitude of 2,086 m (6,800 ft), with excellent views of the peaks and glaciers of the Kanchendzonga Range, Pelling is a fast growing town. With plenty of accommodation, it is a convenient base from which to explore western Sikkim and embark on treks *(see pp302–303)*. This is the state's most beautiful and unspoilt region, with expanses of forest, green river valleys, superb trekking trails, and Sikkim's oldest monasteries. Pelling is a day's drive from Gangtok, and is accessible from Darjeeling (72 km/45 miles south).



Detail of a door, Pemayangste

The main attraction here is the monastic complex of **Pemayangtse**, built in 1705, on a ridge a half-hour's walk from the town. Surrounded by picturesque monks' quarters and outhouses, the austere three-storeyed main monastery is a treasure house of beautiful *thangkas*, murals and images, with a breathtakingly intricate model of Zangdopelri, the seven-storeyed celestial home of Guru Padmasambhava *(see p139)*, on the top floor. Pemayangtse has an annual festival, with spectacular masked dances. Sikkim's second oldest monastery, **Sangachoeling** (built in 1697), is a steep 40-minute hike through thick forests above Pemayangtse. It has exquisite murals. The ruins of Sikkim's 17th-century capital, built by the second Chogyal *(see p298)*, are at **Rabdentse**, 3 km (2 miles) south of Pelling.

Environs

Khecheopalri Lake, 33 km (21 miles) north of Pelling, is an enchanting spot which is sacred to both Buddhists and Hindus, who come here to make a wish. Seen from above, the lake is shaped like the footprint of Buddha. Though surrounded by a forest, it does not have a single leaf floating on its surface, and according to local belief, a holy bird swoops down and removes each leaf as it falls on the water.

Yuksam ⑲

West Sikkim district. 162 km (101 miles) W of Gangtok. 🚌 ℹ *Mount Pandim, Pemayangtse, (03595) 250 573.* **Travel permits** *required* (see p303).

Yuksam was the first capital of Sikkim, where the first Chogyal of Sikkim was crowned in 1641 by three learned lamas. A stone throne and some *chortens* mark this historic spot. Below it is **Kathok Lake**, and **Dubdi Monastery**, built in 1701, with its exquisite Buddhist images and meditation cave, is a steep half-hour climb above. Yuksam is the starting point for the trek to Dzongri *(see p302)*.

Prayer flags fluttering near Yuksam, the first capital of Sikkim

***Mani* stones being carved at Tashiding Monastery**

Tashiding Monastery ⑳

West Sikkim district. 145 km (90 miles) W of Gangtok. 🚌 ○ *daily.* 🎪 *Bumchu Festival (Feb/Mar).* **Travel permits** *required* (see p303).

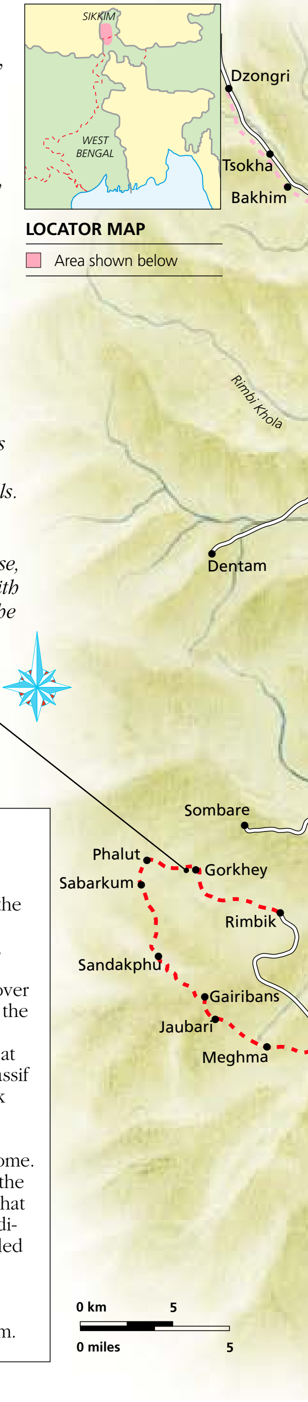
Built in 1716, Tashiding Monastery stands on the summit of a heart-shaped hill, where Guru Padmasambhava is said to have shot an arrow and then meditated on the spot where it fell. Surrounded by *chortens, mani* stones, water-driven prayer wheels, and the Ratong and Rangeet rivers, with Mount Kanchendzonga looming behind the hill, this is a magical spot. During the annual Bumchu Festival it attracts large crowds from all over Sikkim.

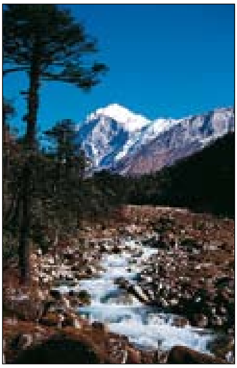
During this festival, sacred water, said to have been put into a sealed jar by a 17th-century Buddhist saint, is mixed with river water and distributed as a powerful blessing to devotees. Miraculously, the supply of sacred water never runs dry, and each year when the jar is unsealed, oracle priests can predict the future of Sikkim from the water level in it – too much or too little water augurs ill for Sikkim's peace and prosperity. Tashiding also has the **Thongwa Rangdol Chorten**, a mere glimpse of which is supposed to wipe away all sins. The main temple, rebuilt in 1987, has large images of the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas.

Trekking in West Bengal & Sikkim

Rhododendron blossoms

The eastern Himalayas, spanning Tibet, Nepal, West Bengal and Sikkim, have some of the world's highest peaks such as Kanchendzonga, Everest, Lhotse and Makalu, and offer a variety of trekking options amidst lush hills bursting with orchids and rhododendron blossoms. The region is also alive with legends of the Abominable Snowman or Yeti, a huge, ape-like creature, who allegedly lives above the snowline. West Bengal's most popular trails are centred around the Singalila Ridge near Darjeeling, with views of Nepal's great massifs, while most of Sikkim's trails are dominated by the mighty Kanchendzonga. The best seasons are between October and November, and February and May.





The Singalila Ridge

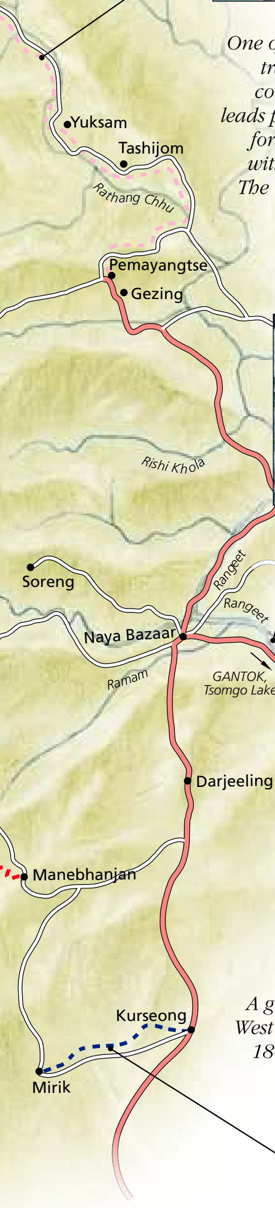
The Singalila Ridge, which begins near Darjeeling and extends to Kanchendzonga, has several trails. The Sandakphu-Phalut route beginning at Maneybhanjan has spectacular views of Everest, Lhotse, Makalu and Kanchendzonga, with plenty of lodges along the way. The 60-km (37-mile) path ends at the roadhead at Rimbik.

Duration: *6 days*
Altitude: *3,636 m (11,929 ft)*
Level of difficulty: *moderate*

MOUNT KANCHENDZONGA

Mount Kanchendzonga, the third highest peak in the world at 8,598 m (28,209 ft), dominates the skyline of Sikkim and West Bengal's Darjeeling district. Its name means "Five Treasures of the Snows", and the Sikkimese believe that the five summits of the Kanchendzonga Range conceal four treasures – gold and gems, grain, silver and holy scriptures. This magnificent mountain is revered as the guardian deity of Sikkim and is worshipped all over the state during the Pang Lhabsol festival, which takes place in the seventh month of the Tibetan calendar (between August and September). Prayers, rituals and masked dances are performed at monasteries – with the massif represented by a red mask crowned with skulls – to ensure that the land is protected in the year to come. Such is the awe in which the Sikkimese hold the peak that in 1999, an Austrian expedition to scale it was cancelled after widespread public protest that this would dishonour the deity and bring catastrophe to Sikkim.

A panoramic view of Mount Kanchendzonga from Dzongri Peak



The Dzongri Trail

One of Sikkim's most popular treks, the trail from Pemayangtse to Dzongri covers 35 km (22 miles) one way. It leads past Yuksam and Tsokha through forests of rhododendron to Dzongri, with clear views of Kanchendzonga. The return to Yuksam takes two days.

Duration: 6–7 days
Altitude: 4,030 m (13,222 ft)
Level of difficulty: *moderate to tough*

Rafting and Kayaking

Rafting is very popular on the Teesta and Rangeet rivers, and is possible between October and November. Kayaks can be hired from the West Bengal Tourism office in Darjeeling.

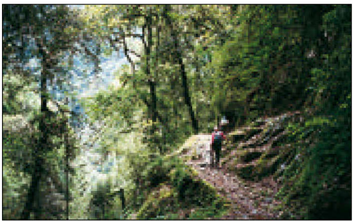
KEY

- 🟥 The Singalila Ridge
- 🟦 Kurseong to Mirik
- ▨ The Dzongri Trail
- ▬ Major road
- ═ Minor road

Kurseong to Mirik

A great introduction to the West Bengal hills, this gentle 18-km (11-mile) hike goes past numerous villages and local tea estates.

Duration: *1 day*
Altitude: *1,767 m (5,797 ft)*
Level of difficulty: *easy*

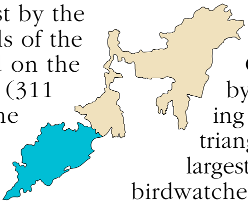


PRACTICAL TIPS

Be prepared: *Acclimatization is essential for altitudes over 3,000 m (9,843 ft). See p767 for information on altitude sickness. Guides and porters can be hired in Gangtok and Darjeeling. The region is hit hard by the monsoon and trekking between early June and late September is not advisable. For more details on trekking see p751.* ***On the trek:*** *Sikkim's trekking trails have suffered deforestation and littering, so ensure that all litter is carried back with you. Drink plenty of water and carry a first aid kit and cooking fuel. Never burn wood, which is a scarce resource. Put out all fires properly, leaving no burning embers. Some trails have leeches (see p767), so carry salt which, when sprinkled on a leech, causes it to fall off.* ***Permits:*** *Foreign visitors require travel permits for Sikkim, issued for a 15-day period from the District Magistrate's Office in Darjeeling, (0354) 225 4233, or the Sikkim Tourism offices in Delhi, (011) 2611 5346, Kolkata, (033) 2281 5328, and Siliguri, (0353) 221 6502. A 14-day extension is permitted, issued by the Department of Tourism in Gangtok, (03592) 221 634, who also issue special permits for restricted areas such as Dzongri, Yumthang and Tsomgo Lake. Travel to these areas is permitted in groups of two or more persons. Trekking permits for Sikkim are available from the Department of Tourism in Gangtok, and Sikkim Tourism in Delhi. All treks must be arranged by a registered agency. For general information see p758.* ***Equipment hire & operators:*** *Himalayan Adventures in Darjeeling, (0354) 225 4004, and Sikkim Trekking and Tours in Gangtok, (03592) 203 638, are reputed agencies. For more details see p755.*

SHOE STAND

ORISSA



Bounded on the west by the thickly forested hills of the Eastern Ghats, and on the east by nearly 500 km (311 miles) of coastline on the Bay of Bengal, Orissa covers an area of 156,000 sq km (60,232 sq miles). Its most famous sights are clustered together in a compact triangle on the eastern coast, in the fertile delta of its major river, the Mahanadi. These include the magnificent 13th-century Sun Temple at Konark, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and other outstanding temples at Bhubaneswar and Puri. To recover from sightseeing fatigue, there are beaches within easy reach at Puri, Konark and Gopalpur-on-Sea, fringed by coconut groves and fishing villages. Just south of this triangle is Chilika Lake, Asia's largest lagoon and a paradise for birdwatchers. The hinterland of the coast is lush with green paddy fields, dotted with ancient Buddhist ruins and tranquil hamlets, where Orissa's beautiful traditional crafts flourish. The spectacular, unspoilt landscape of northern Orissa includes Simlipal National Park, with its wealth of wildlife, and settlements of tribal people who form nearly a quarter of Orissa's population of 35 million.

SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

Towns & Cities

Baleshwar ⑪
Baripada ⑫
Berhampur ⑥
Bhubaneswar ①
Cuttack ⑧
Puri ③

Historic Sites

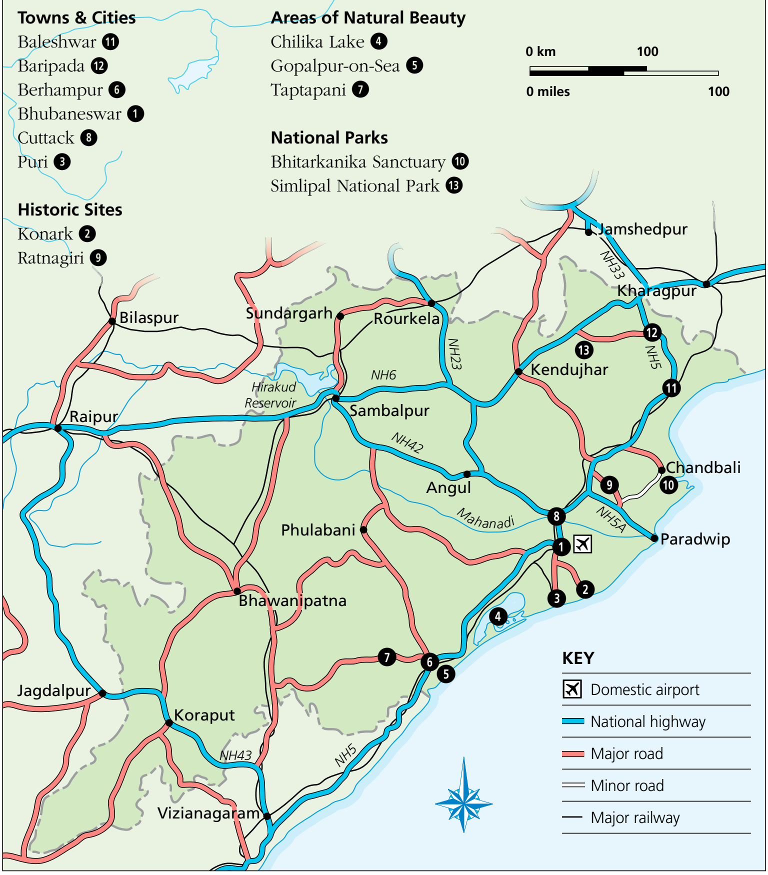
Konark ②
Ratnagiri ⑨

Areas of Natural Beauty

Chilika Lake ④
Gopalpur-on-Sea ⑤
Taptapani ⑦

National Parks

Bhitarkanika Sanctuary ⑩
Simlipal National Park ⑬


0 km 100
0 miles 100
Jamshedpur
NH33
Kharagpur
Bilaspur
Sundargarh
Rourkela
NH23
12
13
NH5
Kendujhar
11
Hirakud Reservoir
NH6
Sambalpur
Raipur
NH42
Chandbali
9
10
Angul
Mahanadi
8
NH5A
Paradwip
Phulabani
1
2
3
Bhawanipatna
4
7
6
5
Jagdalpur
Koraput
NH43
NH5
Vizianagaram
KEY
✈ Domestic airport
National highway
Major road
Minor road
Major railway

◁ **Pilgrims swarming around the huge chariot at the Rath Yatra Festival in Puri**

Bhubaneswar ❶

Painted dowry box from Orissa

The capital of Orissa, Bhubaneswar is famous for its superb Hindu temples. Most of these are in the older, southern part of the city, while the new town, with its modern administrative buildings and wide tree-lined avenues, is in the north. The temples date from the 7th to the 13th centuries, a period which saw the waning of Buddhism and a revival of Hinduism under the successive dynasties that ruled Orissa: the Shailodbhavas and Bhauma Karas in the 7th–8th centuries; the Somavamshis in the 9th–11th centuries; and the Eastern Gangas in the 12th–13th centuries.

Exploring the temples

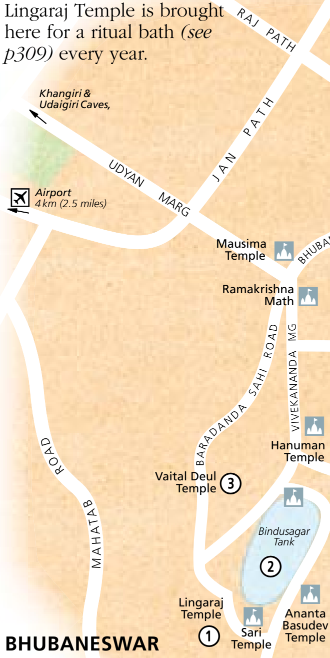
More than 400 temples remain of the 7,000 that are said to have once embellished Bhubaneswar, earning it the title, the "City of Temples". A distinctive version of the North Indian style of temple architecture evolved in Orissa over the centuries *(see p21)*, under the patronage of the different dynasties. As the power and prosperity of these dynasties grew, the temples became bigger and more elaborate. Most of the temples have two main components – a convex curvilinear spire locally known as the *deul* (elsewhere called the *shikhara*), which towers over the inner sanctum where the deity's image is kept; and an entrance porch or assembly hall called the *jagamohan,* with a stepped pyramidal roof. Some of the bigger temples have two or three of these porches. Several smaller shrines and bathing tanks often surround the main temple, which is enclosed in a walled compound.

The magnificent 11th-century **Lingaraj Temple** represents the high point of the Orissan style, where both sculpture and architecture have evolved in perfect harmony. Its grandeur lies in its towering 55-m (180-ft) high *deul* (spire) with dramatic vertical ribs, and in the consummate artistry with which each sculpture and embellishment is executed. The female figures, animals, and friezes of ceremonial processions are full of grace and exuberance. The temple's large courtyard has more than 100 smaller shrines. The main deity here is Shiva as Tribhuvaneswar ("Lord of the Three Worlds"), from which the city takes its name. The intriguing image of a rampant lion springing on a crouching elephant is a powerful motif in this temple, as in many others in Orissa, and some scholars believe it is a royal emblem. Non-Hindus cannot enter the Lingaraj Temple, but can view it from a platform near its northern gateway. The other temples are open to visitors.

The impressive spire of the 11th-century Lingaraj Temple

Devotees bathing in the sacred waters of Bindusagar

North of the temple is the large **Bindusagar Tank** with a pavilion in the middle. It is believed to contain water from every sacred river in India. The main deity of the Lingaraj Temple is brought here for a ritual bath *(see p309)* every year.



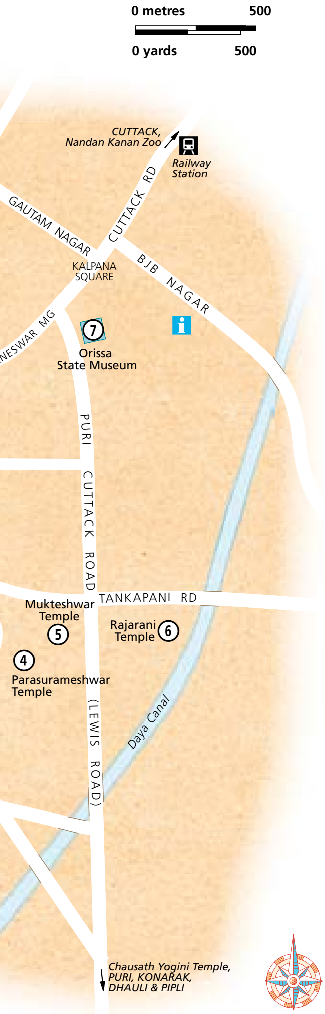
BHUBANESWAR CITY CENTRE

Bindusagar Tank ②
Lingaraj Temple ①
Mukteshwar Temple ⑤
Orissa State Museum ⑦
Parasurameshwar Temple ④
Rajarani Temple ⑥
Vaital Deul Temple ③

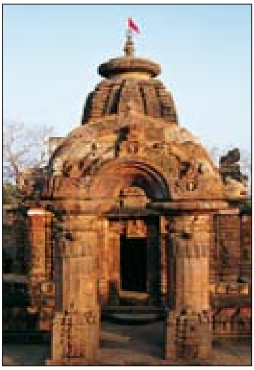
Key to Symbols *see back flap*

The 8th-century **Vaital Deul Temple**, to the west of Bindusagar, is an unusual temple with eerie interior carvings. These indicate that it was probably used for macabre tantric rites, including human sacrifice. The main deity here is a terrifying, eight-armed Chamunda (a form of Durga), with a garland of skulls, seated on a corpse, flanked by a jackal and an owl.

Built in the 7th-century, the **Parasurameshwar Temple**, on the road to Puri, is the best preserved and most lavishly sculpted of the earliest group of temples. The square-towered shrine has a rectangular *jagamohan* adjoining it, decorated with wonderfully animated bands of dancers and musicians on its west window. The main entrance to the *jagamohan* also has a fine carving of domestic elephants capturing wild ones, to the left of the lintel. Set into the outer walls of the shrine are images of deities, among them a superb potbellied Ganesha, and his brother Karttikeya sitting on his vehicle, the peacock.



The nearby 10th-century **Mukteshwar Temple**, one of the jewels of Orissan temple architecture, is notable for its exquisite sculptures and elegant proportions. Its beautiful *torana* (gateway) is decorated with langorously reclining female figures. The *jagamohan* is illuminated by diamond-shaped latticed windows on the north and south walls, their outermost frames depicting enchanting scenes of frolicking monkeys. A unique feature of the *jagamohan* is the decorated ceiling, carved into a lotus with eight petals. The sculptures of female figures in this temple are remarkable for their expressive faces, with hairstyles and jewellery shown in exquisite detail. The octagonal wall surrounding the temple has a number of niches, each containing a wheel, a lotus medallion or a delicate scroll.


The beautifully sculpted *torana* of Mukteshwar Temple

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Bhubaneswar district. 480 km (298 miles) S of Kolkata. 👥 *647,350.* ✈ *4 km (2.5 miles) NW of city centre.* 🚆 🚌 ℹ *Orissa Tourism, BJB Nagar, (0674) 2432 1177.* 🎉 *Tribal Mela (Jan), Ashokashtami (Mar/Apr).*

Set amidst paddy fields, just off the main road, is the 11th-century **Rajarani Temple**. It has a particularly striking spire decorated with miniature replicas of itself, rising in continuous tiers around the tower. This temple is renowned for its fine sculptures of *dikpals* (the guardians of the eight cardinal directions) perched on lotus flowers. Of these, Agni, the God of Fire on a ram, and Varuna, God of the Oceans seated on a crocodile, are particularly impressive. Also remarkable are the tall and slender female figures, carved in high relief on the walls of the temple.

Guardian figures, Rajarani Temple

🏛 Orissa State Museum

BJB Nagar. ○ *Tue–Sun.* ● *public hols.* ▨

The highlight of this interesting museum is its rich collection of Buddhist and Jain sculptures, coins, and painted palm-leaf manuscripts. There are also collections of tribal art, traditional jewellery and musical instruments.

Environs

The **Nandan Kanan Zoo** and botanical gardens, 16 km (10 miles) north of Bhubaneswar, is famous for its white tigers *(see p239)*. The zoo, surrounded by a thick forest, enables the animals to live in natural surroundings. Panthers and gharials *(Gavialis gangeticus)* have been successfully bred in captivity here.

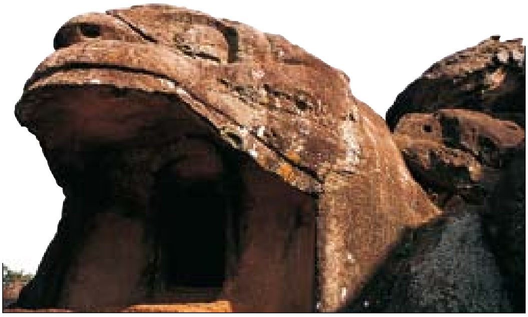
Nandan Kanan Zoo

○ *Tue–Sun.* ▨ ☕ ♿

Exploring Bhubaneswar's Surroundings

Terracotta roof tile

Many sites of historical and architectural significance lie close to Bhubaneswar. They include Jain monastic caves, Hindu temples, Buddhist stupas and ancient rock inscriptions, dotting the lush green landscape around the city. Dating from the 3rd century BC (when the area was part of the great kingdom of Kalinga) to the 13th century AD, these sites bear witness to the region's political and religious importance for a continuous period of over 1,000 years.



Bagh Gumpha at Udaigiri, shaped like the open mouth of a tiger

Udaigiri and Khandagiri Caves

6 km (4 miles) NW of Bhubaneswar.
○ *daily.* *Sadhu Convention (Jan).*

The twin hills of Udaigiri ("Sunrise Hill") and Khandagiri ("Broken Hill") were honeycombed to make retreats for Jain monks in the 1st century BC. Located just off the highway that runs from Bhubaneswar to Kolkata, the hills rise suddenly from the flat surrounding plains, and are separated from each other by the highway.

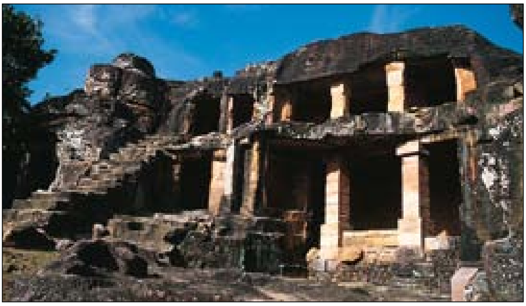
Carvings at Udaigiri Caves

As one approaches from Bhubaneswar, **Udaigiri** is the hill on the right, and is best explored first as it has the more interesting caves. The most impressive of its 18 caves is the double-storeyed **Rani Gumpha** or "Queen's Cave" (Cave 1), which has lavishly sculpted friezes of women dancing and playing music, kings and queens in courtly splendour, elephants, monkeys and foliage. The sculpture is remarkable for its expressive animation, and has been compared with the famous sculpted gateways at Sanchi *(see pp244–5)*.

Other notable caves are **Chhota Hathi Gumpha** or "Small Elephant Cave" (Cave 3), with six superb elephants flanking its entrance; **Ganesh Gumpha** (Cave 10) whose sculptures include an intriguing battle scene with a woman riding an elephant while soldiers in kilts chase her, and **Bagh Gumpha** or "Tiger Cave" (Cave 12), its front ingeniously shaped like a tiger's head with the mouth open. The most significant cave historically is **Hathi Gumpha** or "Elephant Cave" (Cave 14). On the rock above its entrance is an inscription from the 1st century BC. It records that the caves were built by Kharavela, third king of the powerful Chedi dynasty, whose conquests included large parts of Bihar, the Deccan and South India. The inscription also states that King Kharavela rebuilt his capital, Kalinganagar, after it was destroyed by a cyclone. Even today, Orissa remains vulnerable to cyclones, the last one having devastated the state in October 1999. On the summit of Udaigiri stands a ruined apsidal structure, probably used as a place of worship by the monks.

Across the highway, on **Khandagiri**, are 15 caves with carvings of sacred Jain symbols. The **Ananta Cave** (Cave 3), with its figures of twin serpents on the arches above the doorways, is the most important and has superb ornamentation and lively friezes, including one of boys chasing lions, bulls and other animals. Another enchanting carving in this cave shows the goddess Lakshmi in a lotus pool, being bathed with water from pitchers held by two elephants *(see p24)*. Three of the caves – numbers 5, 8 and 9 – have impressive carved figures of the Jain *tirthankaras* in high relief.

Unlike Buddhist caves such as those at Ajanta *(see p479)* and Ellora *(see p478)*, most of the Udaigiri and Khandagiri caves are so low that it is impossible to stand upright in



Khandagiri, the site of a Jain monastery with rock-cut chambers

Hirapur's Chausath Yogini Temple, open to the sky

them. This was in keeping with the self-mortification and asceticism that Jain monks were expected to practise. The site still attracts sadhus, who gather here every year in January to meditate in the caves. A lively fair springs up below the hills to entertain the crowds that gather to seek the sadhus' blessings.

Dhauli

8 km (5 miles) S of Bhubaneswar.

A stark white Buddhist stupa in the middle of serene green paddy fields on the banks of the Daya river marks the site of the bloody battle of Kalinga, fought by one of India's greatest rulers, the Mauryan emperor Ashoka *(see p42)* in 260 BC. He won the war but the carnage and misery it inflicted on the people filled the emperor with remorse and brought about a dramatic change of heart. After this battle, he gave up *digvijaya* (military conquest) for *dharmavijaya* (spiritual conquest), embraced Buddhism, and publicized his new maxims in rock edicts, installed in different parts of his empire. One of these is here, at the base of Dhauli Hill, in which the emperor declares, "All men are my children", and enjoins his officials to ensure impartiality, non-violence, justice and compassion in administration. The top of the rock is sculpted into an imposing elephant's head, symbolizing the Buddhist dharma. This is one of the earliest sculptures found in the subcontinent. The huge white **Shanti Stupa** ("Peace Pagoda") at the top of the hill was built by Japanese Buddhists in the early 1970s.

Chausath Yogini Temple

15 km (9 miles) SE of Bhubaneswar.

This 9th-century, circular temple is dedicated to the *chausath yoginis* or 64 manifestations of the goddess Shakti, who symbolizes female creative energy. All the images, each about 0.6 m (2 ft) tall and carved out of black chlorite stone, are placed in niches in the inner enclosure. The presiding deity, a graceful 10-armed *yogini*, is in the 31st niche. The temple is located in the pretty village of Hirapur.

Garden umbrella from Pipli, with appliqué-work

Environs

Pipli, 15 km (9 miles) south of Bhubaneswar, on the highway to Puri, is a village of artisans famous for their colourful appliqué-work fabrics. The craft originated to serve temples, providing intricately stitched awnings and covers for deities, and hangings in vivid hues for festival days. Today, garden umbrellas, cushion covers, wall hangings and bags are made in Pipli using the same techniques, in which cloth is cut into bird, flower, animal and other decorative shapes, and stitched on to fabric of a contrasting colour. Shops selling these line both sides of the highway as it passes through Pipli, enveloping it in a blaze of colour.

FESTIVALS OF ORISSA

Tribal Mela *(Jan),* Bhubaneswar. Orissa's large and varied tribal population exhibit their dances, music, arts and crafts at this colourful week-long festival

Makar Mela *(14 Jan),* Chilika Lake. Pilgrims bring offerings to a cave and temple devoted to the goddess Kali on a rocky island called Kalijai in Chilika Lake.

Magha Saptami *(Jan/Feb),* Konark. To honour Surya, the Sun God, pilgrims come for a purifying dip in the sea before they worship at the temple. A colourful fair is held, with stalls selling food and gifts.

Ashokashtami *(Mar/Apr),* Bhubaneswar. The image of Shiva, the main deity of the Lingaraj Temple, is taken in procession in a chariot for a ritual bath in the sacred Bindusagar Tank.

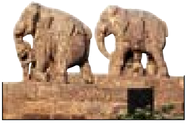
Chaitra Parba *(Apr),* Baripada. This spring festival is marked by displays of the spectacular martial dance known as Mayurbhanj Chhau.

Rath Yatra *(Jun/Jul),* Puri *(see p313).*

Konark Dance Festival *(1–5 Dec),* Konark. Classical dancers perform on an open air stage near the Sun Temple during this five-day festival.

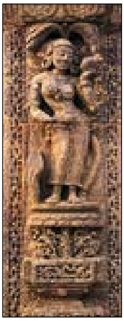
A dancer performing during Rath Yatra celebrations

Konark: The Sun Temple ❷

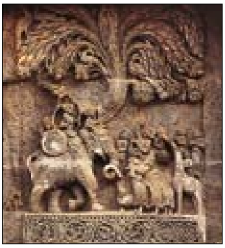


Colossal elephants in the temple complex

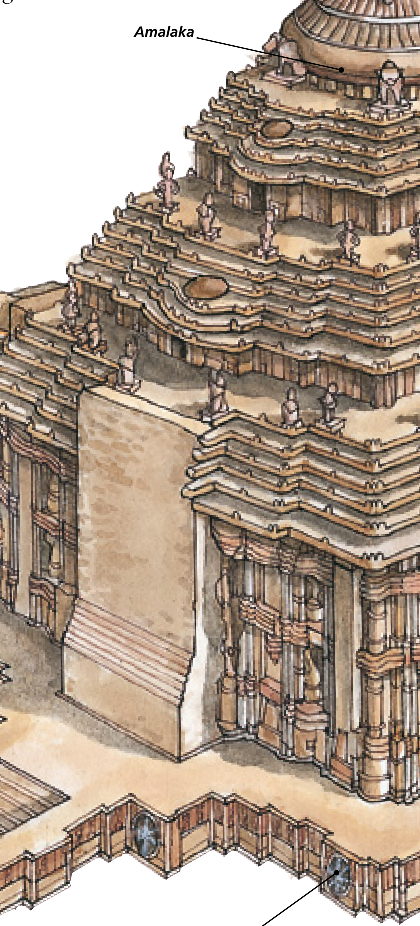
One of India's great architectural marvels, this temple to the Sun God, Surya, was conceived as a gigantic chariot, with 12 pairs of wheels to carry the Sun God on his daily journey across the sky. Built in the 13th century by King Narasimhadeva of the Eastern Ganga dynasty *(see p44)*, the temple is also remarkable for its superb sculptures. Gods and demons, kings and peasants, elephants and horses jostle for space on its walls with dozens of erotic couples. Konark is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

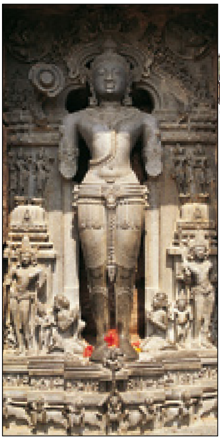


Maiden with Bird
Statues of graceful maidens in a variety of poses are carved on the temple's façades.

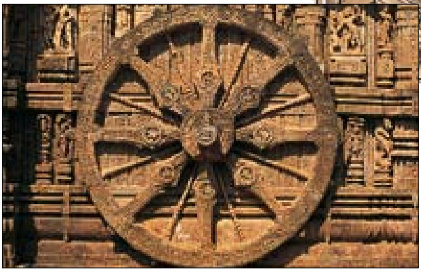


Court Scene
This enchanting relief of the king being presented with a giraffe indicates the existence of maritime trade between Orissa's Eastern Ganga kings and Africa.





★ Surya
The majestic image of the Sun God stands on a chariot, flanked by his wives, and other deities.

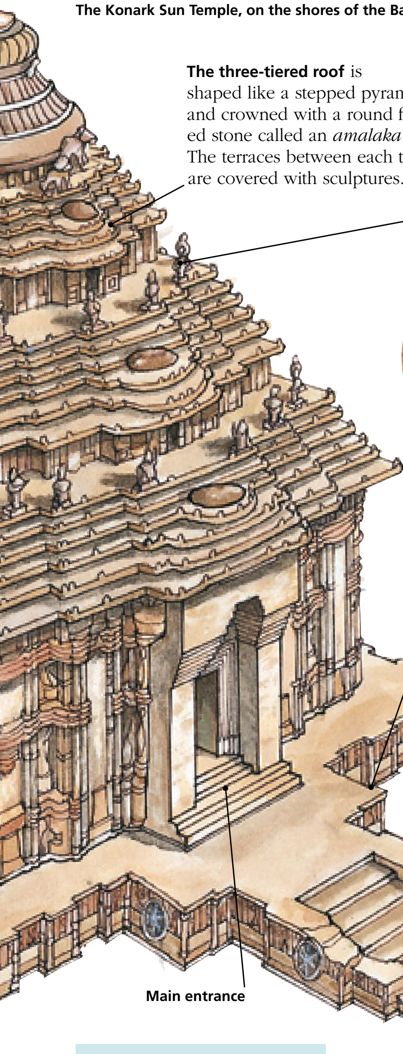


★ Wheels of the Chariot
The 12 pairs of exquisitely carved wheels represent the months in a year, while the eight large spokes mark the division of the day into three-hour sections. The seven horses pulling the chariot represent the days of the week.

The Konark Sun Temple, on the shores of the Bay of Bengal

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

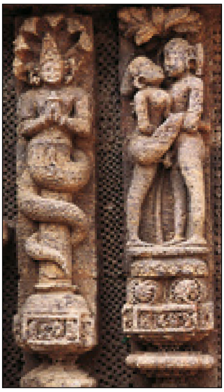
Puri district. 65 km 40 miles) SE of Bhubaneswar. *Orissa Tourism, Sunvilla, (06758) 236 8202.* ○ *daily.* *Magha Saptami (Jan/Feb), Konark Dance Festival (Dec).* **Archaeological Museum** ○ *Fri–Wed.*



The three-tiered roof is shaped like a stepped pyramid and crowned with a round fluted stone called an *amalaka*. The terraces between each tier are covered with sculptures.

The Cymbal Player
This sculpture is in a row of wonderfully animated dancers, musicians and drummers on the terrace of the pyramidal roof.

Medallion
Deities and dancers decorate the medallions on the hub and the spokes of the wheels.



Erotic Sculpture
A demure snake goddess provides a contrast to the amorous couple beside her. The erotic sculptures at Konark are a celebration of the joys of life.

Bhogmandir
The ruined "Hall of Offerings" has gigantic rampant lions on cowering elephants.

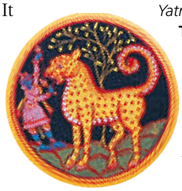
STAR FEATURES

- ★ Surya
- ★ Wheels of the Chariot

Exploring Konark

The Sun Temple at Konark originally had a towering *deul* (spire), 70 m (230 ft) high, over its main sanctuary. Visible far out at sea, the temple was an important navigational aid for European sailors headed for Calcutta (Kolkata), who called it the Black Pagoda. Over time, the temple's easily weathered khondalite stone was progressively corroded by seawinds and sand, and by the 19th century the great tower had completely collapsed. Only its base still remains. The temple's Bhogmandir or "Hall of Offerings", is now roofless, but its plinth and pillars remain, carved with figures of dancers, depicting the poses still used in classical Odissi dance *(see p28)*.

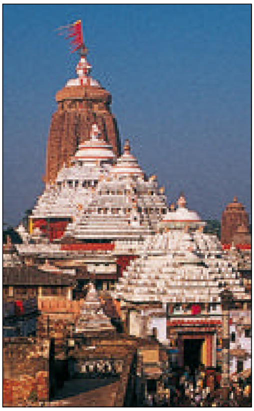
The chariot-shaped *jagamohan* or assembly hall was buried for nearly two centuries under drifting sand. It was only unearthed and restored by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) in the early 20th century. Its many remarkable sculptures include no less than 1,700 elephants in animated motion, carved on the plinth; and several enchanting *alasa kanyas* (maidens at leisure), playing with a pet bird, holding a mirror, or leaning against a doorway.



Hand-painted *ganjifa* playing card from Puri

Three life-size images of the Sun God, Surya, made of contrasting coloured chlorite stone, are positioned so that the sun's rays fall on their faces, turn by turn, at dawn, noon and sunset.

In the northeast corner of the compound is the **Shrine of the Nine Planets**, a large stone slab carved with the deities of the nine planets. Colossal sculptures of war horses and elephants stand at the north and south. Near the compound is the **Archaeological Museum** with fine sculptures recovered from the site. The beach is 3 km (2 miles) from the temple, but is unsafe for swimming because of treacherous undercurrents.



Puri's Jagannath Temple, topped with Vishnu's wheel and flag

Puri ❸

Puri district. 60 km (37 miles) S of Bhubaneswar. 👥 *157,650.* 🚉 🚌 ℹ *Orissa Tourism, Station Rd, (06752) 222 664.* 🛍 *daily.* 🎉 *Rath Yatra (Jun/Jul).* **Jagannath Temple** ○ *daily.* ● *to non-Hindus.*

One of India's most important pilgrimage centres, this seaside town is dominated by the towering Jagannath Temple. Early European sailors, for whom its 65-m (213-ft) high spire was an important landmark, called it the White Pagoda, to differentiate it from Konark's Sun Temple which they named Black Pagoda.

The **Jagannath Temple** was built in the 12th century by King Anantavarman of the Eastern Ganga dynasty *(see p44)*. Surrounded by a 6-m (20-ft) high wall, its main gate is guarded by a pair of brightly painted stone lions. Non-Hindus are not allowed in, but can get a good view of the complex, with its multitude of small shrines and its courtyard thronged with pilgrims, from the roof of the Raghunandan Library across the street from the main gate.

The temple is similar in design to the Lingaraj Temple in Bhubaneswar *(see p306)*, with three smaller shrines adjoining its tall sanctuary tower. The elegant stone column near the entrance, topped with the figure of Arun, charioteer of the Sun God, was brought here from the Sun Temple at Konark in the 18th century.

From the temple, Puri's main street, **Bada Danda**, runs through the town, crammed with pilgrims' rest houses and shops selling food, religious souvenirs and handicrafts. Local specialities are the colourful *pattachitra* paintings and round *ganjifa* playing cards painted with religious themes.

Puri's beach is its other attraction, though not always safe for swimming because of dangerous undercurrents. The long beach front is crowded with stalls and groups of pilgrims along Marine Parade. Sunbathers and swimmers should therefore head to the eastern end, which is cleaner and more secluded, or to the beaches attached to the better hotels. Local fishermen wearing conical hats serve as lifeguards on the beach, and take visitors out to sea in their boats to watch the sunsets.

A family picnic on Puri Beach

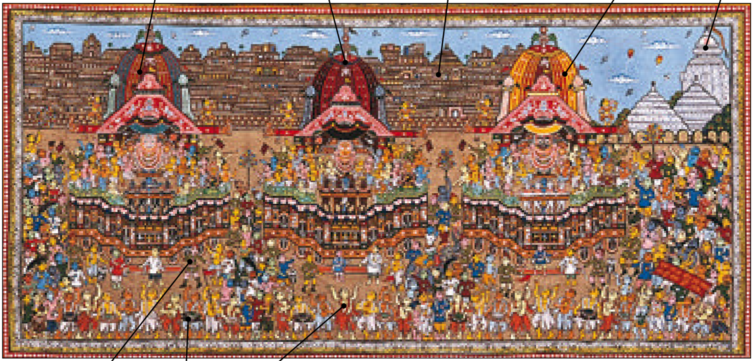
The Jagannath Cult

A unique cult has grown around Jagannath (Lord of the Universe), an incarnation of Vishnu. At Puri's Jagannath Temple, 6,000 resident priests perform the elaborate daily rituals of bathing, dressing and worshipping the image of Jagannath, together with those of his brother Balbhadra and sister Subhadra. Sumptuous meals are offered to the three deities five times a day, prepared daily by 400 temple cooks. During the spectacular Rath Yatra (chariot festival) in June/July, the deities are taken out in a procession in mammoth wooden chariots, pulled by thousands of devotees. The word juggernaut (large truck) is derived from the size and unstoppable force of Lord Jagannath's chariot.

Lord Jagannath

Temple offerings *are sold at numerous stalls at the gates of the temple.*

Devotees *try to spend at least three days paying obeisance to Jagannath.*



Balbhadra has a white face and rides in a chariot with 14 wheels and four horses.

Subhadra has a yellow face and rides in a red chariot.

Puri cityscape

Jagannath's chariot is 1,370 m (4,495 ft) tall and has 16 wheels.

Jagannath Temple

Policeman

Musicians and drummers

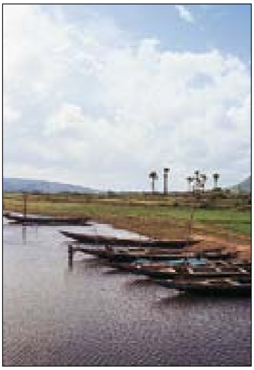
Temple priests

PATTACHITRA PAINTING OF THE RATH YATRA
The Rath Yatra marks Lord Jagannath's annual journey to his birthplace, the Gundicha Temple, just over 2 km (1.3 miles) away. Over 200,000 people, including priests pilgrims, musicians and drummers, join the procession.

Temple dancers, *young boys known as* gotipuas, *perform the classical Odissi dance* (see p28) *before the deities every night. They are accompanied by musicians singing verses from the* Gita Govinda, *a 12th-century epic poem* (see p292).

Balbhadra, Subhadra and Jagannath, *the three deities, are believed to be of tribal origin, but have been absorbed into the Hindu pantheon. They have huge, all-seeing eyes, and outstretched arms to protect and bless all mankind.*

Fishermen on the beach at Gopalpur-on-Sea *(see p316)* ▷



A view of Chilika Lake, a haven for water birds and dolphins

Chilika Lake ④

Puri, Ganjam & Khordha districts. 50 km (31 miles) SW of Puri. 🚉 *Balugaon, then taxi or bus.* 🚌 *Balugaon & Satpada.* ℹ *Orissa Tourism, Barkul, (06758) 220 488.* 🎪 *Makar Mela (Jan).* **Satpada and Nalabana Islands** ⛵ *hired from Barkul, Balugaon, Satpada & Rambha.*

A great, shallow lagoon covering 1,100 sq km (425 sq miles), Chilika is separated from the Bay of Bengal by a sandy ridge, with just a narrow channel connecting it to the sea. Believed to be the largest brackish water lake in Asia, Chilika is recognized as one of the most important wetlands in the world because of the phenomenal variety of aquatic and birdlife it supports. From November to February, the lake and its reed islands teem with nesting birds, including several winter migrants, such as the golden plover, the flamingo, the purple moorhen and the osprey. A major attraction at Chilika are dolphins, which are often spotted off **Satpada Island**, located at the confluence of the lake and the sea. **Nalabana Island**, at the core of the lake, is the best place for birdwatching. Orissa Tourism arranges boat trips to both the islands. **Kalijai Temple**, built on a small rocky island, is a pilgrimage spot which attracts festive crowds during the Makar Mela in January. The lake also supports the local people who earn their living from Chilika's prawns, crabs and fish.

Gopalpur-on-Sea ⑤

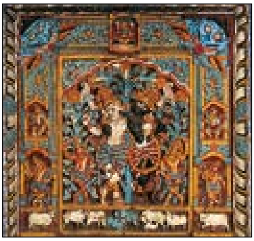
Ganjam district. 172 km (107 miles) SW of Bhubaneswar. 🚉 *Berhampur 18 km (11 miles) E of town centre, then taxi or bus.* 🚌 ℹ *Orissa Tourism, Berhampur Railway Station, (0680) 228 0226.*

This quiet seaside town was, in ancient times, a great seaport for Orissa's maritime trade with Indonesia *(see p318)*. The British later developed it as a beach resort and it now has a sleepy charm, except during the Durga Puja holidays *(see p281)* in October, when it swarms with tourists from Bengal. Swimming in the sea is not safe because of treacherous undercurrents. But the beach, lined with bungalows and dotted with casuarina groves, is a good place to spend the day, watching the fishing boats and the sunset.

Berhampur ⑥

Ganjam district. 170 km (106 miles) SW of Bhubaneswar. 🚉 🚌 ℹ *Orissa Tourism, Railway Station, (0680) 228 0226.*

The main commercial centre in southern Orissa, Berhampur is famous for its beautiful handwoven ikat silk, available in its bustling bazaar where weavers sit at their looms. The railhead for the seaside town of Gopalpur-on-Sea, Berhampur is also a convenient base for visiting **Jaugarh**, 35 km (22 miles) north of the city. Jaugarh has a 3rd-century BC rock edict erected by the Emperor Ashoka following the Battle of Kalinga, after which he had a change of heart. The edict is similar to the one at Dhauli *(see p309)*, in which Ashoka declares "All men are my children" and spells out his ethical code. A short distance away, at **Buguda**, is the Biramchinarayan Temple, built in the 17th century, with beautiful murals depicting scenes from the *Ramayana*.



Painted panel from the 17th-century temple at Buguda

Floral offering to a goddess of fertility at Taptapani's hot springs

Taptapani ⑦

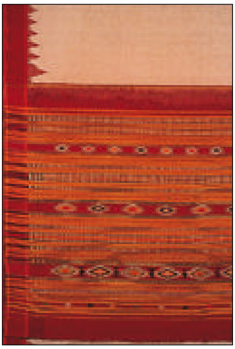
Ganjam district. 51 km (32 miles) W of Berhampur. 🚌 ℹ *Orissa Tourism, (06816) 255 031.*

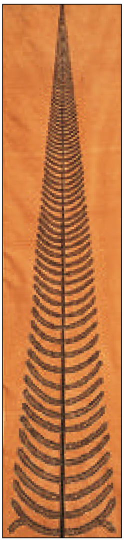
Picturesquely located on a forested hill in the Eastern Ghats, this spa is renowned for its hot springs. The boiling, sulphurous water bubbles out of a crevice in the hillside and is piped to a pool in a clearing. Near the pool is a small shrine to a tribal goddess of fertility as, apart from being beneficial for various chronic ailments, the hot springs are also believed to cure infertility. A tree with seed pods overhangs the pool, and women seeking the infertility cure are supposed to pick up seeds from the tree that have fallen to the muddy bottom of the pool – a difficult feat, especially since the water is too hot for more than a quick dip. The Saora tribal women *(see p321)*, whose villages are nearby, can often be seen taking the cure. The most comfortable way to enjoy the hot springs is by renting a room in the Orissa Tourism rest house just below the pool, which has hot water from the springs piped directly into its bathtubs.

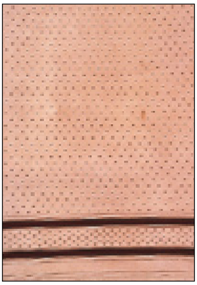
The Orissa Weaver's Art

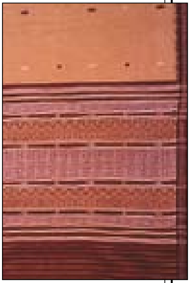
Orissa has a long and rich tradition of handwoven textiles. Over 300,000 people work in the state's textile industry producing a range of materials, from the simple cotton weaves of tribal areas, to the elaborate painted textiles for use in temples. Orissa's forests yield a wealth of wild silk cocoons which, in recent years, have been supplemented by mulberry plantations. The state is famous for its silk ikat weaves, an intricate technique in which warp and weft threads are tie-dyed in such a way as to produce patterns when woven. Typical motifs include birds, animals, fish, seashells, holy *rudraksh* beads and temple spires.

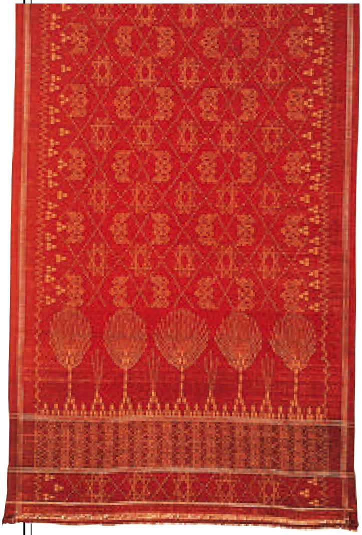
Eagle motif in ikat fabric

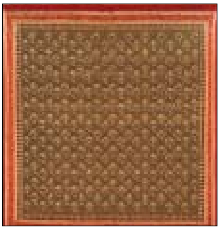

The *bomkai* cotton sari *from Ganjam district was traditionally woven for the local aristocracy. Its distinguishing features are the temple spire pattern on the border, and the rich end piece with its elaborate ikat motifs.*

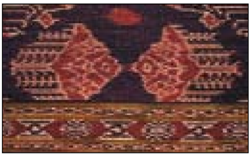

Vriksha Pattachitra *shows a contemporary minimalist version of the traditional painted textile, used as a temple hanging. The tree is painted on natural-colored wild silk* (tussar).


The *kotpad* sari *from the Koraput tribal region has a simple elegance, with unbleached cotton offset by a rich red madder-dyed border.*


The *ekphulia* (one flower) sari *achieves a striking effect by repeating the one-flower and fish motifs.*




The conch-shell motif *in this silk ikat panel with its delicate, curvilinear pattern, is an example of the fine sense of design and colour that Orissa's weavers have.*


The fish motif *in this* tussar *silk textile symboilizes prosperity and luck. Below the fish are a row of* damroos *(hand-held drums).*

The *jotai* ikat sari *is inspired by the finger-painted patterns, called* jotai, *that adorn the walls of many village homes in Orissa. The rich red colour of the sari, and the rows of stylized trees and temple spires on the borders, add to the sumptuous effect.*

Cuttack ❽

Cuttack district. 35 km (22 miles) N of Bhubaneswar. 👥 *535,150.* 🚆 🚌 ℹ *Orissa Tourism, Arunodaya Market Building, Link Rd, (0671) 231 2225.* 🎪 *Bali Yatra (Oct/Nov).*

Situated on the Mahanadi Delta, Cuttack is Orissa's most populous city, and was its capital from the 10th century onwards until 1956, when the capital was moved to Bhubaneswar *(see p306)*. There is little evidence today of the city's historic past. The gateway and moat of the 13th-century **Barabati Fort**, in northwest Cuttack, are all that remain of this great citadel which once had a nine-storeyed palace. The eastern part of town is more interesting, with silversmiths' shops in **Balu Bazaar** and **Nayasarak**, where Cuttack's famous silver filigree jewellery is made. Nearby, in the shops on **Jail Road**, the full range of Orissa's beautiful handicrafts are available, including ikat silk, carved hornware and paintings.

In this area, a cluster of green domes marks the 18th-century **Kadam Rasul Mosque**, where the Prophet Mohammed's footprints are carved on a round stone.

The 18th-century Kadam Rasul Mosque in Cuttack

THE INDONESIAN CONNECTION

From the 4th century BC to the 14th century AD, the power and wealth of successive kingdoms in Orissa derived from their rich maritime trade, especially with Bali, Java and Sumatra. Indeed, ever since the 10th century, the word *kling*, derived from Kalinga which was the ancient name of Orissa, has been used in Indonesia to refer to India and Indians. With the trading links came cultural influences, which are still visible in Orissa's crafts. The state's weavers originally learned the intricate art of ikat weaving *(see p317)* from Indonesia, and later were especially commissioned to weave all the silks for ceremonial use in the royal courts and temples of Indonesia. Another Orissa craft that originally came from Indonesia was the silver filigree work that is still being done in Cuttack. Today, Orissa's old maritime links with Bali, Java and Sumatra are commemorated in a festival called Bali Yatra (Bali Journey) held in Cuttack during the full moon of Kartik (October/November). A colourful fair is held on the banks of the Mahanadi river, and tiny boats made of banana bark are lit with clay lamps and floated in the river.

The colourful entrance gate to the Bali Yatra fair at Cuttack

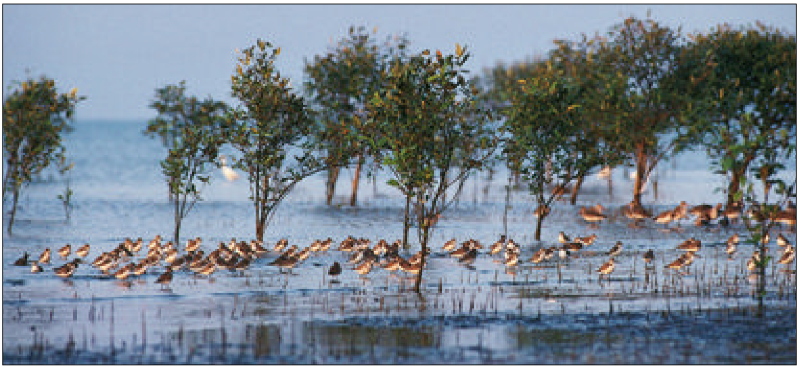
Ratnagiri ❾

Cuttack district. 70 kms (44 miles) NE of Cuttack. 🚌 ℹ *Orissa Tourism, Link Rd, Cuttack, (0671) 231 2225.*

The three Buddhist sites of Ratnagiri, Udaigiri and Lalitgiri, situated close to each other, are most conveniently visited on a day trip from Cuttack or Bhubaneswar, driving through a beautiful landscape of low hills and lush paddy fields. The most impressive of the three sites is Ratnagiri ("Hill of Jewels") which, between the 7th and the 11th centuries, was a major Buddhist university and monastic establishment, described by the 7th-century Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang *(see p219)*. Located on top of a mound, crowned by a large stupa, the best-preserved structure here is a monastery with a central courtyard and an impressive colonnade around the monks' cells. A beautiful 4-m (13-foot) high image of the seated Buddha can be seen inside, together with other Buddhist divinities, and the entrance doorway is superbly carved. A small **Archaeological Museum** displays other sculptures found at the site.

Udaigiri ("Sunrise Hill"), 10 km (6 miles) south of Ratnagiri, is still being excavated and seems to have better preserved sculptures. The western spur of the hill has a row of rock-cut

The serene 7th-century meditating Buddha image at Ratnagiri



Flocks of waders amidst the mangroves at Bhitarkanika Sanctuary

sculptures, while the northern spur is covered with the ruins of brick stupas. A colossal sculpture of the Buddha here has an inscription dating it to the 8th century.

Lalitgiri ("Hill of Grace"), about 10 km (6 miles) south of Udaigiri (and directly connected by bus to Cuttack), is believed to be the oldest of the sites. The ruins, spread over two adjacent hills, include a terraced stone platform, a gallery of life-size Bodhisattva figures and an apsidal temple. Some of the better-preserved sculptures and a carved doorway have been incorporated into a modern Hindu temple. At the foot of a hill is a village of stone-carvers, who keep alive Orissa's fine tradition of stone sculpture.

🏛 Ratnagiri Archaeological Museum
○ *Sat-Thu.* ▨

Bhitarkanika Sanctuary ⑩

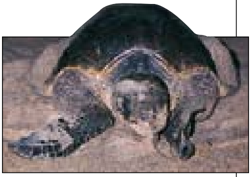
Kendrapara district. 106 km (66 miles) NE of Cuttack. **Entry points:** *Chandbali, Rajnagar.* 🚉 *Bhadrakh, 50 km (31 miles) NW of Chandbali, then bus.* 🚌 *to Rajnagar.* ⛴ *from Rajnagar or Chandbali to Dangmal, Ekakula & Habalikhati.* ℹ *For permits and bookings contact Bhubaneswar, (06786) 220 397 or Rajnagar, (06729) 272 460.* ○ *mid-Oct–mid-Apr.* ▨

Famous as the nesting ground of the Olive Ridley turtle, this 170-sq km (66-sq mile) sanctuary is situated on the delta of the Brahmani and Baitarani rivers on the Bay of Bengal. It also has the largest mangrove forests in the country after the Sunderbans in West Bengal *(see pp288–9)*, with 63 of the 72 known mangrove species found here.

Encompassing 12 offshore islands, long sandy beaches and numerous rivulets and creeks, Bhitarkanika is home to an impressive range of fish, more than 170 species of birds such as storks, egrets, ibis and migratory ducks, and the largest number of estuarine crocodiles in the country.

Accommodation is available at a forest rest house at Chandbali, the entry point to the sanctuary, as well as deep within the sanctuary at Dangmal, Habalikhati and Ekakula (all three are accessible by boat). Orissa Tourism in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack organize tours and the necessary Forest Department permits for Bhitarkanika.

THE OLIVE RIDLEY TURTLE



An Olive Ridley turtle nesting at Gahirmatha Beach

Every year, in an awe-inspiring phenomenon, hundreds of thousands of Olive Ridley turtles arrive from as far away as South America, to nest at Gahirmatha, a 10-km (6-mile) stretch of beach near the mouth of the Brahmani river in Bhitarkanika Sanctuary. The world's largest *arribada* (Spanish for "the great arrival") occurs in February and March, when some 200,000 nesting females congregate here, each laying between 50 and 200 eggs in deep hollows they excavate in the sand. After a two-month incubation with the sun's heat, the hatchlings emerge in millions and scamper out to the sea at night. Sadly, less than 0.1 per cent survive to adulthood, as dogs, seagulls, sharks as well as human poachers take an enormous toll on their numbers. The absence of *arribadas* in 1997 and 1998 caused much alarm among conservationists, until in March 2000 a record 700,000 Olive Ridleys arrived at Gahirmatha. Since the turtles return each year to nest at the spot where they were born, the cycle continues.

Olive Ridley hatchlings heading for the sea

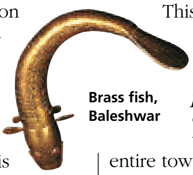
Baleshwar ⓫

Baleshwar district. 214 km (133 miles) NE of Bhubaneswar. 🚆 🚌 ℹ *Orissa Tourism, SPA Complex, Station Square, (06782) 262 048.*

Once a bustling seaport, Baleshwar was established by the British in 1642. It was later in the possession of the French and the Dutch, but had lost its importance by the 18th century, with the silting up of the port. Its colonial past is visible in the ruins of some Dutch tombs, and what are said to be the remnants of old canals which led to the sea. Today Baleshwar is a sleepy town, surrounded by paddy fields and villages, and renowned for the pretty hand-crafted lacquer boxes and brass fish made locally.

Environs

The tranquil seaside village of **Chandipur**, 16 km (10 miles) east of Baleshwar, is easily reached by a short taxi or scooter ride from the town. Here, the sea recedes up to 5 km (3 miles) at low tide, leaving an expanse of clean white sand. Orissa Tourism offers accommodation in a picturesque old bungalow a short distance from the beach, with the day's fresh catch served at dinner. The only blot on this peaceful landscape is the Indian Army's test firing range for rockets, just outside Chandipur village, against which environmentalists and villagers have been campaigning for many years.

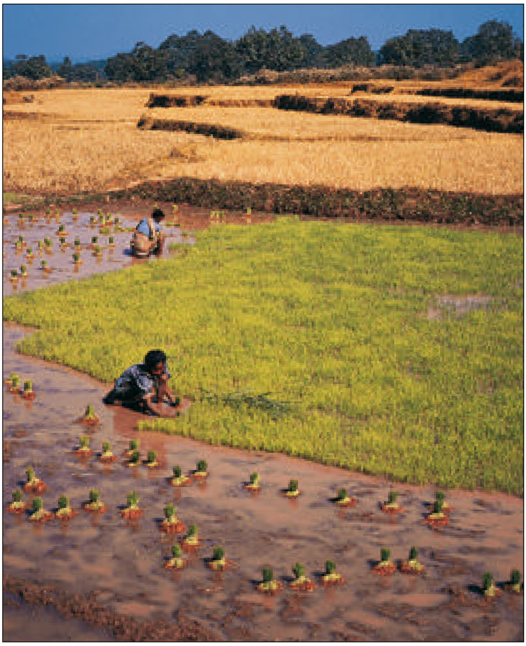


Brass fish, Baleshwar

Baripada ⓬

Mayurbhanj district. 295 km (183 miles) NE of Bhubaneswar. 🚆 🚌 🛒 *daily.* 🎉 *Chaitra Parba (Apr), Rath Yatra (Jun/Jul).*

The main market town of northeastern Orissa, Baripada is the headquarters of Mayurbhanj district, which is rich in forests and has a large population of tribal people. Baripada is also the gateway to Simlipal National Park. The town holds a Rath Yatra (chariot festival) in June/July, which takes place around the **Jagannath Temple**.



Women tending their paddy fields near Baleshwar

This festival is a small-scale version of the one that is held in Puri *(see p312)*, but is equally lively and vibrant, as the entire town joins in the procession. A unique feature in Baripada is that the chariot of the female deity, Subhadra, is pulled only by women.

Another colourful festival held here is Chaitra Parba (in April), when tribal groups perform the vigorous Chhau dance wearing fabulous costumes. It was originally performed by warriors just before they went on to the battlefield. In the eastern part of town, **Baripada Museum** has fine sculptures, pottery, and coins found in the area.

🏛 **Baripada Museum**
○ *Tue–Sun.* 💳

Environs

Haripur, 16 km (10 miles) southeast of Baripada, has the evocative ruins of palaces and temples built by the rulers of the Bhanja dynasty who made this their capital in the 15th century. The most impressive ruins are of the brick-built Rasikaraya Temple, and the Durbar Hall of the Bhanja kings.

Simlipal National Park ⓭

Mayurbhanj district. 320 km (199 miles) N of Bhubaneswar. **Entry points:** *Lulung & Jashipur.* 🚆 *Baripada, 50 km (30 miles) E of the park, then bus or taxi.* 🚌 *to Lulung (via Baripada) & Jashipur.* ℹ *For bookings and permits contact Field Director, Simlipal Tiger Reserve, Baripada, (06792) 52 553.* ○ *Nov–mid-June.* 💳 📷 *extra charges.* ✋ *Jeeps available in the park.*

This extraordinarily beautiful park is located amidst the pristine forests and hills of northeast Orissa. Stretching over an area of 2,750 sq km (1,062 sq miles), Simlipal comprises dense *sal (Shorea robusta)* and rosewood forests, broken by lush grasslands. Numerous rivers and cascading rapids traverse the forest, creating spectacular

A waterfall cascading down the hills at Barehipani, Simlipal National Park

waterfalls, such as those at Joranda (150 m/492 ft) and Barehipani (400 m/1,312 ft).

Originally the maharaja of Mayurbhanj's private hunting ground, Simlipal was declared a wildlife sanctuary in 1957. One of the earliest tiger reserves in India, it is home to about 100 tigers, as well as an impressive range of other fauna including elephants, leopards, deer, gaur (Indian bison) and pangolins (or scaly anteaters). These curious-looking animals, covered with large overlapping scales, feed exclusively on termites and ants, tearing open anthills with their powerful claws and scooping up the insects with their long tongues. When threatened, the pangolin rolls up into an impenetrable armoured ball. Over 230 species of birds can also be seen at Simlipal.

Pangolin at Simlipal

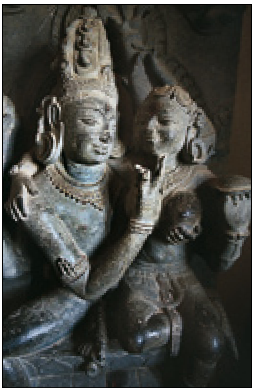
The rare *muggers* (marsh crocodiles) can be spotted in rivers or basking on the banks where they dig tunnels to keep cool. At Jashipur, the western entry point to the park, there is a **Crocodile Sanctuary** where the reptiles can be observed at close quarters. One of the park's best spots for viewing wildlife is located in the grasslands at **Bacchuri Chara**, which are a favourite haunt of elephant herds. Another good area for sightings is at **Manghasani Peak** (1,158 m/3,799 ft), one of the highest in the park. Basic food and accommodation are available in forest rest houses at Lulung, Barehipani, Chahala, Joranda and Nawana.

Environs

The capital of the Bhanja kings in the 10th and 11th centuries, **Khiching** has some of the finest examples of temple sculpture to be seen in Orissa. It is 20 km (12 miles) west of Jashipur, the western entry point to Simlipal National Park, and 114 km (71 miles) west of Baripada. The main sight here is the towering Khichakeshwari temple, reconstructed in the early 20th century entirely from the ruins of the original temple that stood here. The temple is adorned with superb images of several deities, including a vibrant dancing Ganesha. A number of other temples, together with the ruins of two forts built by the Bhanja kings, dot this hamlet.

The small **Archaeological Museum** is well worth visiting. Among its highlights are outstanding life-size statues of Shiva and his consort Parvati, and exquisite sculptural panels from now-fallen temples.

Archaeological Museum
○ *Tue–Sun.* ● *public hols.*



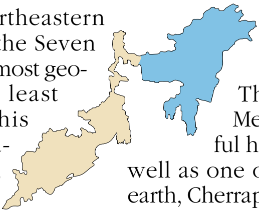
An 11th-century sculpture of Shiva and Parvati, Khiching

TRIBES OF ORISSA

More than 60 different tribes, descended from the original, pre-Aryan inhabitants of the land, live in Orissa. Many still inhabit hills and forests in the remote interior of the state, relatively untouched by outside influences. The Saoras, who live in the vicinity of Taptapani *(see p316)*, are agriculturists whose mud houses are beautifully painted and decorated with carved doors and lintels. Further west live the Koyas, whose customs decree that their women must only marry considerably younger men. The dominant tribe in Orissa are the Kondhs, who used to perform human sacrifice to ensure the fertility of their land, until the British stamped out this practice in the mid-19th century. Today the Kondhs are renowned for their knowledge of medicinal herbs, and their beautiful metal jewellery. The Orissa government is now promoting tours of some tribal areas. Interested visitors should contact Orissa Tourism in Bhubaneswar, (0674) 43 2203, for information about the necessary permits, as well as accommodation in areas that have few facilities for travellers. For more details see pp754–55.

Kondh girl in her tribal jewellery

ASSAM & THE NORTHEAST



Assam and the six northeastern states, often called the Seven Sisters, make up the most geographically isolated and least visited part of India. This region, which has international borders with China, Myanmar (Burma), Bhutan and Bangladesh, has an unusually rich diversity of ethnic groups, languages, religions, climates and landscapes. The largest of the Seven Sisters is Assam, spread along the valley of the Brahmaputra river, and famous for its tea gardens and for the rare one-horned rhinoceros. The rolling green hills of Meghalaya boast the delightful hill station of Shillong, as well as one of the wettest places on earth, Cherrapunji. Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura are home to more than 100 different tribes, with distinct and fascinating cultures. The Northeast is also a naturalist's paradise, with a wealth of rare flora and fauna.

SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

Towns & Cities

- Agartala ⑬
- Aizawl ⑭
- Bomdila ③
- Dimapur ⑱
- Guwahati ①
- Imphal ⑮
- Itanagar ⑧
- Kohima ⑰
- Sibsagar ⑥
- Tezpur ②
- Ziro ⑨

National Parks

- Kaziranga National Park ⑤
- Namdapha National Park ⑩

Hill Stations & Areas of Natural Beauty

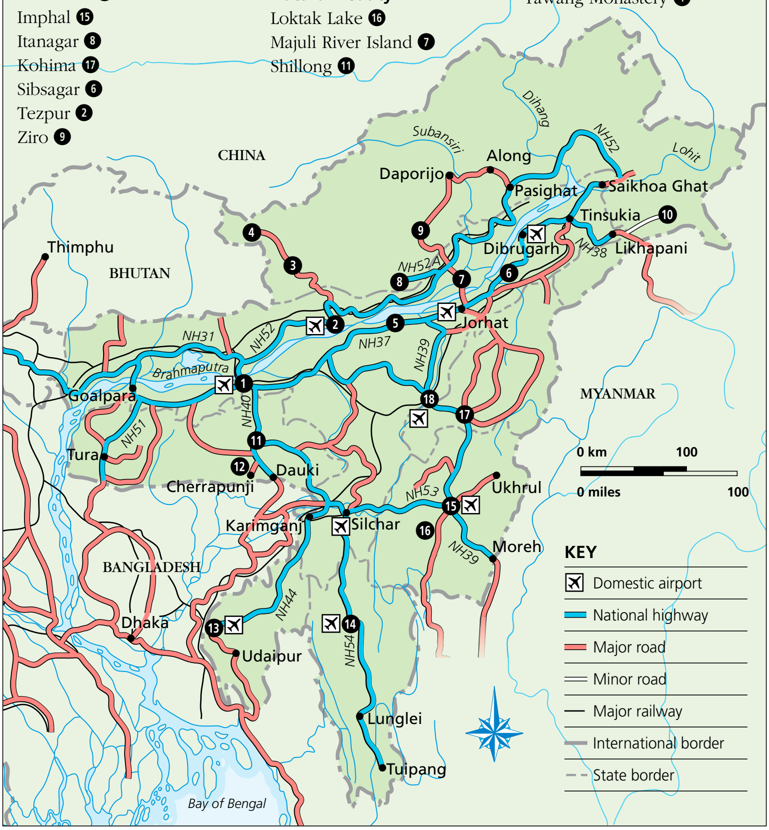
- Loktak Lake ⑯
- Majuli River Island ⑦
- Shillong ⑪

Tours

- Shillong to Cherrapunji Tour ⑫

Monasteries

- Tawang Monastery ④


CHINA
BHUTAN
Thimphu
Subansiri
Dihang
Lohit
NH52
Daporijo
Along
Pasighat
Saikhoa Ghat
Tinsukia
Dibrugarh
NH38
Likhapani
NH52A
Jorhat
NH31
NH37
NH39
Brahmaputra
Goalpara
NH40
NH51
Tura
Dauki
Cherrapunji
Karimganj
Silchar
NH53
Ukhrul
Moreh
MYANMAR
BANGLADESH
Dhaka
NH44
NH54
Udaipur
Lunglei
Tuipang
Bay of Bengal
0 km 100
0 miles 100
KEY
Domestic airport
National highway
Major road
Minor road
Major railway
International border
State border
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18

◁ **Lush ferns surrounding a small waterfall in the dense rainforests of Meghalaya, near Shillong**

Devotees at Guwahati's Kamakhya Temple, a major centre of pilgrimage for Hindus

Guwahati ❶

Kamrup district. 1,081 km (672 miles) NE of Kolkata. 👥 *808,000.* ✈ *Borjhar, 25 km (16 miles) W of city centre, then bus or taxi.* 🚉 🚌 ℹ *Assam Tourism, Station Rd, (0361) 254 4475.* 🎉 *Rongali Bihu (Apr), Ambubachi (Jun), Assam Tea Festival (Jan).*

The capital of Assam, Guwahati is also the gateway to Northeast India. Ringed by the Neelachal Hills, the city stretches along both banks of the broad Brahmaputra river. An ancient seat of tantric Hinduism, with a number of interesting temples in its environs, Guwahati is now a busy commercial centre for Assam's tea and oil industries. Its outer fringes are dotted with the slender, graceful betelnut palm trees from which Guwahati (literally "Betel Nut Market") derives its name.

Kamakhya Temple

Perched on Nilachal hill, 8 km (5 miles) northwest of the city, this temple is one of India's most important pilgrimage destinations. The present structure with its typically Assamese beehive-shaped *shikhara* dates to the 17th century, after the original temple was destroyed by Muslim invaders. According to legend, as a furious and grieving Shiva carried the corpse of his wife, Sati (also known as Parvati) around the skies, parts of her dismembered body fell to the earth *(see p279)*. All these sites have been sanctified by major temples. Kamakhya is believed to mark the place where her vagina fell, and is therefore said to have special powers associated with energy and creation. In accordance with tantric rituals, a goat is sacrificed here every day, and offered to the goddess. The giant turtles in the temple ponds look forward to being fed by visitors. The colourful annual Ambubachi festival, which marks the end of the earth's menstrual cycle, attracts pilgrims here from all over India, to be blessed by the goddess.

Brass utensil for serving betel leaf

Navagraha Temple

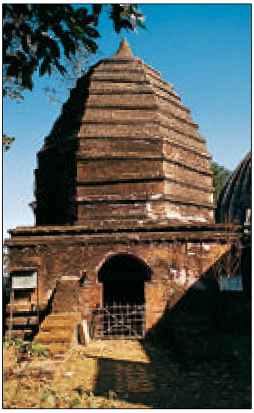
On Chitranchal hill, in northeast Guwahati, is the Navagraha ("Nine Planets") Temple, believed to mark the site of the ancient city of Pragjyotishpur, Guwahati's old name, which was famous as a centre of astronomy. Beneath its red beehive-shaped dome is a dark chamber with nine lingas representing the nine planets.

Umananda Temple

Peacock Island. ⛴ *Umananda Ghat, 1 km (0.6 miles) N of railway station.*
Enchantingly located on the lush green Peacock Island in the middle of the Brahmaputra, this 16th-century temple is also dedicated to Shiva's wife. The island, swarming with friendly langur monkeys, is an excellent place to stand and watch the river, deceptively slow on the surface but with swift undercurrents.

State Museum

GN Bordoloi Rd. ***Tel*** *(0361) 254 0651.* ○ *Tue–Sun.* 🚫
This interesting museum, just east of the railway station, has fine reconstructions of tribal villages, a comprehensive



Umananda Temple, on a pretty island in the Brahmaputra

collection of local handicrafts and a gallery of medieval stone and bronze sculptures, which were excavated from Ambari, an archaeological site in the heart of the city.

Zoo & Botanical Gardens

RG Baruah Rd. ○ *Sat–Thu.* ▨ 📷 *extra charges.*

The well-maintained zoo is in the eastern part of the city. Clouded leopards, hornbills and, of course, the native one-horned rhinos, can be seen in spacious, moated enclosures. The Botanical Gardens adjoin the zoo.

Vashishtha Temple, on a wooded hill surrounded by streams

Environs

The **Vashishtha Temple**, 12 km (7 miles) southeast of Guwahati, stands in a pretty spot that marks the confluence of three streams, with a waterfall and groves of trees around it. This is said to be the site of the ashram of the sage Vashishtha, a character in the *Ramayana (see p27).*

Sualkuchi, 32 km (20 miles) west of Guwahati, is a major weaving centre for Assam's famous golden-hued *muga* and *paat* silk. Several houses here have women working at their looms, and they are happy to welcome visitors.

Hajo, 32 km (20 miles) northwest of Guwahati, is a pilgrimage site for Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims. The 16th-century Hayagriva Madhava Temple, on Manikuta Hill, is sacred to Hindus and Buddhists, who believe that the Buddha died here. Fine bas-reliefs of scenes from the *Ramayana* decorate its walls. Below the temple is a pond, home to Hajo's most famous resident – a giant turtle. On another hill is the Poa Mecca ("Quarter of Mecca") Mosque, established by an Iraqi prince who visited Assam in the 12th century. A pilgrimage here is believed to be equivalent to a quarter of the piety attained by a Haj pilgrimage to Mecca.

The spectacular temple ruins at **Madan Kamdev** are 50 km (31 miles) northwest of Guwahati. Exuberantly erotic carvings of deities and celestial nymphs lie strewn on a small hillock here. They date from the 10th to 12th centuries, when the area was ruled by the Pala dynasty *(see p44).*

Sculpture of a goddess from the temple ruins at Madan Kamdev

THE MIGHTY BRAHMAPUTRA

The Son of Brahma, Creator of the Universe, is the name of this majestic river which dominates life in Assam and much of Arunachal Pradesh. Curiously, it is the only Indian river to have a male name. The Brahmaputra begins its 2,900-km (1,802-mile) course from near the holy mountain of Kailasa in Tibet, where it is known as the Tsang Po. Plunging down from a height of 5,200 m (17,060 ft), it then carves a straight, deep 1,100-km (684-mile) long furrow through the Tibetan Plateau. As it continues, the river makes a great sweeping turn around the eastern end of the Himalayas, before plummeting through the deep gorges of upper Arunachal Pradesh where it is called the Siang. Here, the river is crossed by a group of frighteningly fragile-looking bridges made of rope, including the 367-m (1,204-ft) long suspension bridge at Kamsing, one of the longest in the world.

The Brahmaputra enters the plains near the Assam-Arunachal border, and then flows westward through Assam for 724 km (450 miles), broad and tranquil, except during the monsoon when it swells enormously, flooding flat land and forests, and sweeping away homes, crops and animals in an annual ritual of destruction. Just before the end of its course, the Brahmaputra merges with the Ganges to create the huge Bengal delta, before emptying into the Bay of Bengal in Bangladesh.

The Brahmaputra river at dawn

The ruins of Tezpur's Da Parbatia Temple, dating to the 5th–6th centuries AD

Tezpur ❷

Sonitpur district. 180 km (112 miles) NE of Guwahati. 👥 *58,250.* ✈ *Saloni, 10 km (6 miles) N of town centre, then bus or taxi.* 🚉 🚌 ℹ *Tourist Office, Zenkins Rd, (03712) 221 016.*

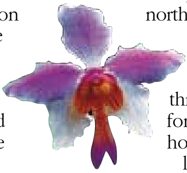
A picturesque town on the north bank of the Brahmaputra river, Tezpur is surrounded by undulating green valleys covered with tea gardens. The hills of northern Arunachal provide a scenic backdrop to the town, and for visitors, Tezpur is a convenient stop and a take-off point for trips to parts of Arunachal Pradesh.

Tezpur means "City of Blood", and this gory name is derived from its legendary past as the capital of the Hindu demon kings, the Asuras, said to have been vanquished here by Lord Krishna in a bloody battle. More recently, in 1962, Tezpur was close to another bloodbath when the invading Chinese army reached its outskirts before suddenly declaring a ceasefire *(see p57).*

The ruins of the **Da Parbatia Temple**, 5 km (3 miles) west of the city, dating from the 5th to 6th centuries AD, bear testimony to Tezpur's ancient past, and represent the earliest example of sculptural art in Assam. All that is left of the temple are some sculptures and an exquisitely carved door frame, with images of the river goddesses Ganga and Yamuna on either side. **Cole Park**, close to the Tourist Lodge, is Tezpur's prettiest spot, with a beautifully landscaped garden near a lake. It is embellished with 9th- and 10th-century sculptures unearthed in the city. A charming 19th-century colonial church stands behind the Tourist Lodge.

Environs

Scenic **Bhalukpong**, 58 km (36 miles) northwest of Tezpur, is set in green foothills that mark the border of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. The Kameng river flows past it. Added attractions are medicinal hot springs, and an Orchid Centre, located 7 km (4 miles) away at **Tipi**, with some 500 varieties of orchids native to Arunachal. **Nameri Sanctuary**, 35 km (22 miles) north of Tezpur, covers 200 sq km (77 sq miles). The Jia Bhoroli river winds through its deciduous forests, which are home to clouded leopards, *mithuns* (Indian bison) and the rare white-winged wood duck. Nameri can be explored on elephant back. The Potasali Eco-Camp on the river, run by the Forest Department, organizes white-water rafting and *mahseer* fishing trips for visitors. **Orang Wildlife Sanctuary**, 65 km (40 miles) northwest of Tezpur, is often described as a mini-Kaziranga *(see pp330–31)* since it has a similar landscape of marshes, streams and grassland, the favoured habitat of the one-horned rhinoceros. This little sanctuary is also home to the Asiatic wild buffalo and the Hoolock gibbon.



Epiphytic orchid

Nameri Sanctuary
Permits *Divisional Forest Officer, Koloabhomora, (03712) 220 854.* ○ *Sep–Apr.* ▨ 📷 *extra charges.* ✋ ⌂ *Potasali Eco-Camp 09854019932, 09435250025.*

Orang Wildlife Sanctuary
Permits *Divisional Forest Officer, Mangaldoi, (03712) 22 065.* ○ *Oct–Apr.* ▨ ✋

Bomdila ❸

West Kameng district. 140 km (87 miles) NW of Tezpur. 🚌 ▨ *Losar (Feb/Mar).* **Travel permits** *required* (see p758).

The scenic road from Tezpur winds steeply up through thick forests to this pleasant town, at an altitude of 2,530 m (8,301 ft). The headquarters of Arunachal's West Kameng district, Bomdila has Buddhist monasteries surrounded by apple orchards, with views of snowcapped peaks, terraced paddy fields and waterfalls. The **Crafts Centre** is famous for its carpet weaving. The town's inhabitants belong largely to the Monpa and Sherdukpen tribes, who combine Tibetan Buddhism with some of their original animist rituals and beliefs. They wear a curious black cap with five "tails" projecting from its rim, that serve to drain rainwater away from the face.

Monpas celebrating their New Year with a Yak Dance near Bomdila

Rows of prayer wheels at the 17th-century Tawang Monastery

Tawang Monastery ④

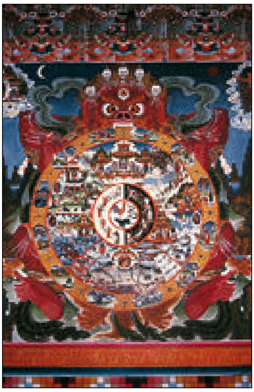
Tawang district. 325 km (202 miles) NW of Tezpur. 🚌 🎉 *Losar (Feb/Mar).* **Travel permits** *required* (see p758).

The largest Buddhist monastery in India, Tawang is situated in Arunachal Pradesh at an altitude of 3,050 m (10,007 ft). As the road ascends from Bomdila, the scenery becomes alpine, lush with pine, oak and rhododendron forests, and a short, high-altitude bamboo which is the favourite food of the red panda *(see p299)*. Past the Dirang Valley with its old *dzong* (fort), the road climbs sharply to the **Sela Pass**. At 4,249 m (13,940 ft), this is the second highest motorable pass in the world; the highest is in Ladakh *(see p143)*. This barren, desolate landscape is softened by a serene lake that lies below the Sela Pass.

Beyond a memorial to a valiant Indian soldier who held up the advancing Chinese army during the India-China conflict of 1962, the road descends to a beautiful, wide valley. The monastery, dramatically located on a spur surrounded by snowcapped peaks, dominates the valley. When the Dalai Lama fled Tibet in 1959, his route into India was through Tawang, and he still visits the area regularly to hold special prayers.

Founded in 1645 by a lama from Merak in neighbouring Bhutan, this Gelugpa (Yellow Hat) establishment *(see p139)* has over 500 resident monks. It was also the birthplace of the sixth Dalai Lama. The three-storeyed *dukhang* (assembly hall) has a magnificent 8-m (26-ft) high statue of the Buddha. The ancient library, leading onto the main courtyard, has an excellent collection of *thangkas* and valuable Buddhist manuscripts.

The **Bramdungchung Nunnery**, associated with Tawang Monastery, is located 12 km (7 miles) northwest of Tawang. The road to the monastery, which can be reached by jeep, reveals a stunning alpine landscape of snowpeaks, Monpa hamlets with stone houses, and juniper and dwarf rhododendron bushes. Fluttering prayer flags and a long prayer wall mark the approach to the nunnery, guarded, as are most of the monasteries in this region, by fierce Tibetan mastiffs.



An intricately painted Wheel of Life mural at Tawang Monastery

FESTIVALS OF ASSAM & THE NORTHEAST

Losar *(Feb/Mar),* Bomdila and Tawang. The Monpa and Sherdukpen tribes of Arunachal Pradesh celebrate their New Year with feasts, masked dances and special prayer sessions at monasteries.

Dancers at the Rongali Bihu Festival, Assam

Rongali Bihu *(Apr),* Guwahati. The Assamese New Year is celebrated across the state with exuberant singing, drumming and dancing. The women perform a gracefully sinuous dance, while the men accompany them on horns and drums. The liveliest festivities are in Guwahati.

Weiking Dance *(Apr/May)*, Shillong. This three-day festival to usher in the spring features processions, prayers and dances. Khasi virgins, wearing crowns and clan jewellery, dance in a circle, while young men dressed as warriors, with shields, bows and arrows, form a ring around them.

Lai Haraoba *(Apr/May),* Imphal and Moirang. This Manipuri spring festival honours the many pre-Hindu nature deities revered in the region. Special prayer ceremonies, dazzling displays of Manipuri martial arts and graceful ritual dances are performed to appease the deities. The most beautiful celebrations take place at Moirang.

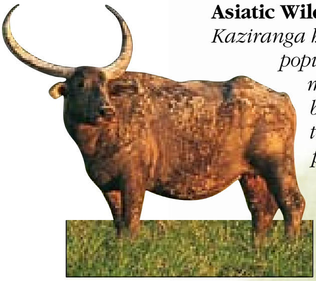
The Brahmaputra river in full swell, flowing through Assam ▷

Kaziranga National Park ⑤

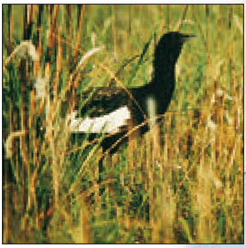
Bar-headed goose in flight

Assam's magnificent Kaziranga National Park, declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, is the home of the Indian one-horned rhinoceros. Beautifully situated on the banks of the Brahmaputra, the 430-sq km (166-sq mile) park's landscape is characterized by vast grasslands and swamps, dotted with patches of semi-evergreen forest. The Mikir Hills, where several animals migrate during the monsoon, form its southern boundary. Kaziranga's rich variety of wildlife includes 80 tigers, large numbers of the Asiatic wild buffalo, herds of wild elephants, Hoolock gibbons, pythons and 300 species of birds, including the rare Bengal florican.

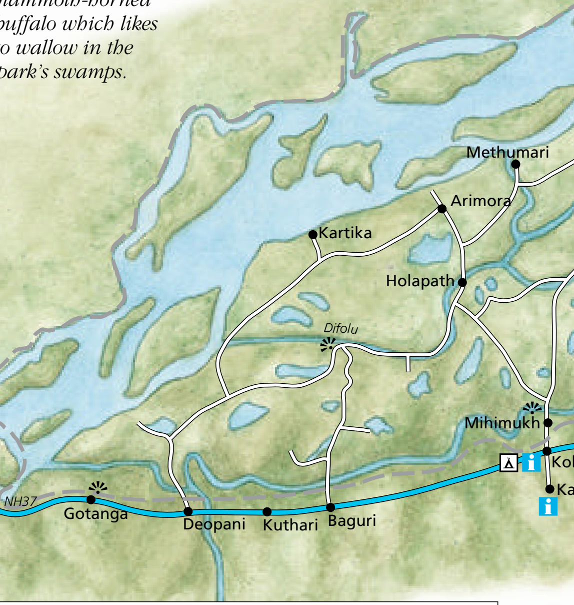
Exploring Kaziranga
Visitors on elephant-back are safe from charging rhinos and wild buffaloes.



Asiatic Wild Buffalo
Kaziranga has India's largest population of this mammoth-horned buffalo which likes to wallow in the park's swamps.



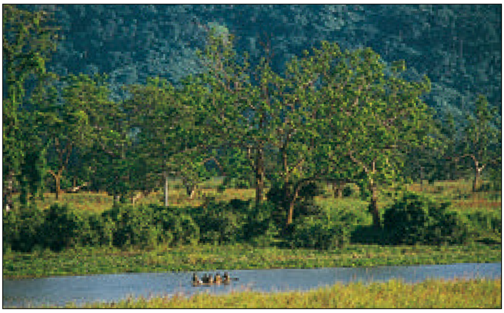
Bengal Florican
This rare bird has beautifully streaked plumage.



THE INDIAN ONE-HORNED RHINOCEROS

Kaziranga is one of the last refuges of the Indian one-horned rhinoceros *(Rhinoceros unicornis)*, an endangered species that was close to extinction at the beginning of the 20th century. Successful conservation measures have seen their numbers rise to 2,500 (across Assam and the foothills of Nepal), of which 1,500 are in Kaziranga. Once found extensively across the subcontinent, the rhino population dwindled dramatically because of widespread poaching for its horn, a prized ingredient in Chinese medicine. Actually a mass of closely matted hair, each rhino horn fetches an exorbitant price in Southeast Asia, where it is believed to have great medicinal and aphrodisiac properties.

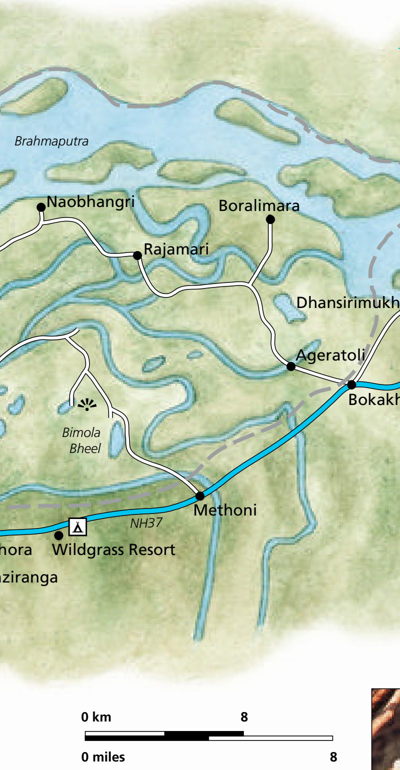
A rhino mother and her baby in Kaziranga's vast grasslands



Beel (Shallow Lake)
Floods inundate the park every monsoon, leaving behind beels *and marshes as they recede. These attract herds of wild elephants, and many other animals and water birds.*

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Golaghat district. 215 km (134 miles) NE of Guwahati. ✈ *Jorhat, 96 km (60 miles) NE of Kohora, the entry point, then taxi.* 🚉 *Furkating, 75 km (47 miles) E of Kohora, then taxi.* 🚌 ℹ *Bonani Tourist Lodge, Kohora, (03776) 26 2423.* ○ *Nov–Apr.* ✋ 📷 *extra charges.* ✋ *Jeeps available.* 🐘


Brahmaputra
Naobhangri
Boralimara
Rajamari
Dhansirimukh
Ageratoli
Bokakhat
Bimola
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hora
Wildgrass Resort
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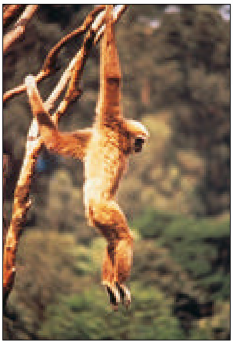
8

KEY

- Park boundary
- National highway
- Minor road
- ℹ Tourist information
- Viewpoint
- Accommodation

Hog Deer
These animals, closely related to the spotted deer (chital), are found in large numbers in the park's riverine grasslands.

Wildgrass Resort
Located 5 km (3 miles) east of Kohora, just outside the park, this eco-friendly resort (see p702) *arranges elephant rides and trips to nearby tea plantations* (see pp262–3).



Hoolock Gibbon
This 1-m (3.3-ft) ape can be recognized by the distinctive silvery band above its eyebrows, and its loud whooping hoot, which resounds through the forest.

Sibsagar ❻

Sibsagar district. 370 km (230 miles) NE of Guwahati. 👥 *54,500.* ✈ *Jorhat, 60 km (37 miles) S of city centre, then taxi or bus.* 🚆 🚌 ℹ *Assam Tourism, near Shivadol Temple, (03772) 222 394.* 🎉 *Shivratri (Feb/Mar).*

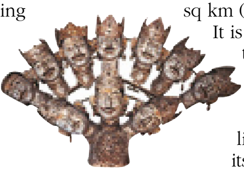
At the heart of Assam's tea and oil-producing region, Sibsagar is also the state's most historic city, as the seat of the Ahom dynasty *(see p49)* which ruled Assam for 600 years. Originally from Myanmar (Burma), the Ahoms converted to Hinduism and gradually indigenized after conquering Assam in 1228. The Ahoms were defeated by the Burmese in 1817, and their kingdom became part of the British Indian Empire in 1826.

The Ahoms were great builders, as is evident from the ruins in and around Sibsagar. Dominating the town is the enormous 103-ha (255-acre) man-made **Sibsagar Lake**, with three temples on its banks. Especially impressive is the towering **Shivadol Temple** with its 33-m (108-ft) high gilded spire, built by an Ahom queen in 1734. About 4 km (2 miles) south of the town are the ruins of two 18th-century brick palaces, **Kareng Ghar** and **Talatal Ghar**. Both are seven storeys high, and the latter also has three underground floors and a warren of secret tunnels. To its northeast is the elegant **Rang Ghar**, the oval, double-storeyed royal sports pavilion, constructed in 1746.

Majuli River Island ❼

Jorhat district. 314 km (195 miles) NE of Guwahati. 🚌 *Neamati Ghat, 13 km (8 miles) N of Jorhat.* ⛴ *from Neamati Ghat to Majuli, then bus to Garamur.* ℹ *On arrival, foreigners must register with the Sub-Divisional Officer, Majuli, who also handles bookings.*

Perhaps the largest inhabited river island in the world, Majuli covers an area of 929 sq km (359 sq miles). It is easy to forget that Majuli is an island, holding within it hills, rivulets and little islands of its own. This amorphous landmass is constantly being sculpted into new dimensions and shapes by the Brahmaputra. Every year during the monsoon, the river submerges large tracts of land, forcing the inhabitants to move to higher ground. After the floods recede, leaving behind fertile, freshly silted land, the people return to cultivate the area.



Vaishnavite mask, Majuli

As interesting as Majuli's distinctive landscape are its *satras*, unique monasteries founded in the 15th century by the Vaishnavite reformer-philosopher, Shankardeva. The *satras* are rich repositories of traditional Assamese arts and crafts, and regularly stage dance-dramas in praise of Vishnu. Majuli's main settlement is at **Garamur** which has two *satras*. About 20 others are scattered across the island. Visitors can stay in the *satras*, and should offer to make a donation towards overnight stays or meals.

Itanagar ❽

Papum Pare district. 420 km (261 miles) N of Guwahati. 👥 *35,000.* 🚆 *Lakhimpur, 60 km (37 miles) NE of town centre, then taxi or bus.* 🚌 ℹ *Directorate of Tourism, Itanagar, (0360) 221 4745.* **Travel permits** *required* (see p758).

Until it became the capital of Arunachal Pradesh in 1971, Itanagar was a settlement of the Nishi tribe, one of the largest among the 26 major tribes that inhabit the state. A

Bamboo forests in the vicinity of Itanagar, in Arunachal Pradesh

Apatani woman in the rice fields near Ziro

few traditional Nishi longhouses still remain, now all but swamped by Itanagar's newly-constructed government buildings. The Nishis are easily recognizable – they sport black and white hornbill feathers in their cane headgear, wear their hair in a bun on their foreheads and often carry bearskin bags.

The **Nehru Museum**, near the Secretariat, offers a comprehensive look at the arts and crafts of all the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. Cane and bamboo artifacts, textiles, jewellery, and totem objects are on display here. A pretty but bumpy 6-km (4-mile) drive north from Itanagar leads to the lovely, emerald-green **Gyakar Sinyi Lake**, surrounded by dense forests. Many of the tall trees are festooned with orchids.

Adi longhouse near Along

🏛 **Nehru Museum**
Siddharth Vihar. ***Tel*** *(0360) 221 2276.* ○ *Sun–Thu.* ♿ 🚫

Ziro ⑨

Lower Subansiri district. 150 km (93 miles) NE of Itanagar. 👥 *12,300.* 🚌 ℹ *Deputy Commissioner's Office, (03788) 224 255.* ***Travel permits*** *required* (see p758).

The picturesque town of Ziro in central Arunachal Pradesh, lies in a large, flat valley, surrounded by low pine-covered hills. This area, better known as the Apatani Plateau, is the home of the prosperous Apatani tribe who practise a unique system of cultivation that combines rice-growing with pisciculture. The flooded paddy fields are stocked with fingerlings, the two staples of Apatani diet thus coming from the same plot of land. Like the Nishis, the Apatanis wear their hair in a bun on their foreheads, held with a brass skewer. Both the men and women are tattooed and the women sport huge bamboo noseplugs.

Northeast of Ziro, three other areas, **Daporijo**, **Along** and **Pasighat**, are now open to foreigners (with permits). The latter two are situated on the Brahmaputra river and are inhabited by the Adi tribe *(see p336)*. The drive from Ziro to Pasighat (300 km/186 miles) is wonderfully scenic, through dense virgin forest and tribal villages with thatched longhouses.

Namdapha National Park ⑩

Changlang district. 380 km (236 miles) NE of Itanagar. 🚉 *Margherita, 64 km (40 miles) SW of Miao, the entry point.* 🚌 ℹ *Director, Project Tiger, Miao, (03807) 222 249.* ○ *Oct–Mar.* ♿ ***Travel permits*** *required* (see p758).

This superb park in remote eastern Arunachal Pradesh, bordering Myanmar, covers 1,985 sq km (766 sq miles). Rising from the plains to 4,500 m (14,764 ft) in the Himalayas, it covers a variety of habitats, and is the only reserve in India where all the four big cats of the Himalayas – tiger, leopard, clouded leopard and the rare snow leopard are found. It was declared a Tiger Reserve in 1983. Other wildlife includes the great Indian hornbill, the red panda *(see p299)*, and the Hoolock gibbon *(see p331)*.

Environs

The legendary Burma Road (or Stilwell Road) begins at **Ledo**, 60 km (37 miles) southwest of Miao. This 1,700-km (1,056-mile) road, of great strategic importance in World War II, connected Ledo, via the forbidding jungles and mountains of Arunachal Pradesh and Northern Myanmar, to Kunming in China's Yunnan province. Supervised by the American General Joseph Stilwell and built in two years at enormous human cost, it has now fallen into disrepair, but is still used by locals travelling on foot.

Tribal people of eastern Arunachal Pradesh on the Burma Road

Locally made bamboo baskets on sale in Shillong's Bara Bazaar

Shillong ⓫

East Khasi Hills district. 127 km (79 miles) S of Guwahati. *132,900.* i *Meghalaya Tourism, 3rd Secretariat, Lower Lachumiere, (0364) 250 0736.* *Weiking Dance (Apr/May).*

Capital of the tiny state of Meghalaya, Shillong, with its mist-shrouded hills, pine forests, lakes and waterfalls, is sometimes described as the "Scotland of the East". Lying at an altitude of 1,496 m (4,908 ft), it was chosen as the headquarters of the British administration in Assam in 1874. It soon developed into a popular hill station, providing refuge from the searing heat of the plains.

The town still retains a distinctly colonial ambience, with its mock-Tudor bungalows, churches, polo ground and beautiful 18-hole golf course. It is also the home of the matrilineal Khasi tribe. The idyllic countryside around the town can be easily explored in short excursions.

Bara Bazaar

Bara Bazaar Rd. ○ *Mon–Sat.*

This sprawling market offers a vivid glimpse of Khasi tribal society. The stalls are piled high with produce from the surrounding villages – honey, pineapples, piglets, dried fish, wild mushrooms, raw betel nut and bamboo baskets. The market is dominated by Khasi women, who run most of the stalls. Dressed in their traditional tunic-like *jainsems* and tartan-checked shawls, these cheerful matriarchs can drive a hard bargain.

Museum of Entomology

Umsohsun Rd. ***Tel*** *(09863) 021965.* ○ *Mon–Sat.* ♿

This small private museum, situated north of Bara Bazaar, was established in the 1930s by the Wankhar family, and boasts a collection of rare butterflies and insects found in Meghalaya. Among them are huge stick insects, iridescent beetles, and the giant yellow and black birdwing butterfly which cloaks itself in a deadly poison to protect itself from predatory birds. The family also runs a breeding centre for rare species.

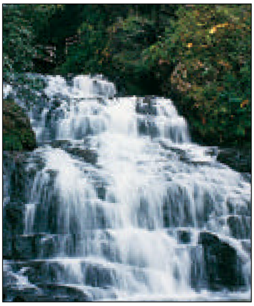
Ward Lake & Lady Hydari Park

Park ○ *daily.* ♿ 📷 *extra charges.*

In the centre of town, the horseshoe-shaped Ward Lake has pleasant promenade paths around it, paddle boats for hire and a café. A short distance to its south is Lady Hydari Park, with a pretty Japanese garden and a mini zoo which includes fauna native to Meghalaya's forests, such as hornbills, leopard cats, and the aptly named slow loris, a ferret-like creature that crawls around as though heavily drugged.

Environs

The beautiful **Bishop** and **Beadon Falls** are 3 km (2 miles) north of Shillong, just off the Guwahati-Shillong Highway. Along the same route, 17 km (11 miles) north of Shillong, is **Umiam Lake**, a large artificial reservoir set among forested hills. It offers facilities for angling, kayaking and water-skiing, and has an orchidarium in the adjacent park. The scenic **Elephant Falls** are 11 km (7 miles) south of Shillong. The road to **Mawphlang**, 24 km (15 miles) southwest of Shillong, is richly forested with pine and oak, and is a good place to see some of Meghalaya's rare species of orchids in their natural habitat.



The Elephant Falls, flowing over ferns and rocks

THE KHASIS

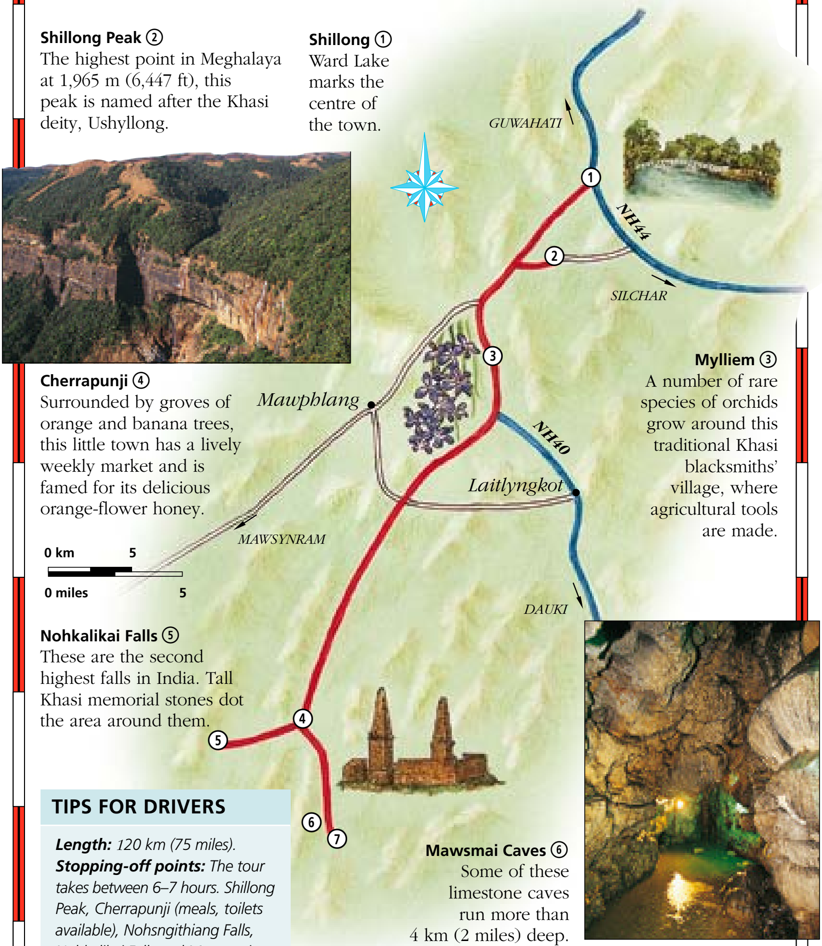
The Khasis are the predominant tribe in the Shillong area. Believed to have originated in Southeast Asia, their language belongs to the Mon-Khmer group. It is not known when they migrated to this region. Today, the majority of Khasis are Christians, their ancestors converted by British missionaries in the 19th century. Nevertheless, they retain many of their tribal customs. Chief among these is their matrilineal social structure, which dictates that landed property can only be inherited by females, with the youngest daughter given a special position as custodian of the family house and the clan's traditional rituals.

Khasi matriarch at her stall in Shillong's main market

Shillong to Cherrapunji Tour ⓬

The road to Cherrapunji through the East Khasi Hills winds through dense pine and oak forests, full of ferns and orchids. En route are dramatic gorges and ravines, waterfalls and limestone caves. Cherrapunji is one of the wettest places on earth, and established a world record of an incredible 2,621 cm (1,032 in) of rain in 1861. It continues to record an average rainfall of 1,143 cm (450 in) in the monsoon months of July to September.

Cherrapunji's famous oranges



Shillong Peak ②
The highest point in Meghalaya at 1,965 m (6,447 ft), this peak is named after the Khasi deity, Ushyllong.

Shillong ①
Ward Lake marks the centre of the town.

Mylliem ③
A number of rare species of orchids grow around this traditional Khasi blacksmiths' village, where agricultural tools are made.

Cherrapunji ④
Surrounded by groves of orange and banana trees, this little town has a lively weekly market and is famed for its delicious orange-flower honey.

Nohkalikai Falls ⑤
These are the second highest falls in India. Tall Khasi memorial stones dot the area around them.

Mawsmai Caves ⑥
Some of these limestone caves run more than 4 km (2 miles) deep.

Nohsngithiang Falls ⑦
On a clear day, there is a fine view of the plains of Bangladesh from these impressive falls, also known as the Seven Sisters Falls.

TIPS FOR DRIVERS

Length: *120 km (75 miles).*
Stopping-off points: *The tour takes between 6–7 hours. Shillong Peak, Cherrapunji (meals, toilets available), Nohsngithiang Falls, Nohkalikai Falls and Mawsmai Caves are the best places to stop.*
Getting around: *Meghalaya Tourism, (0364) 222 6054, and several travel agencies run daily tours from Shillong to Cherrapunji. Take a torch to explore the caves.*

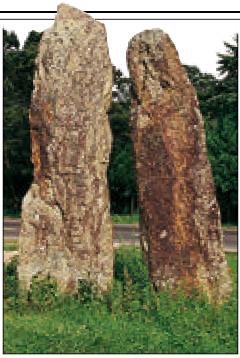
KEY

🟥 Tour route
▨ Other roads
🟦 National highway

Tribal Peoples of the Northeast

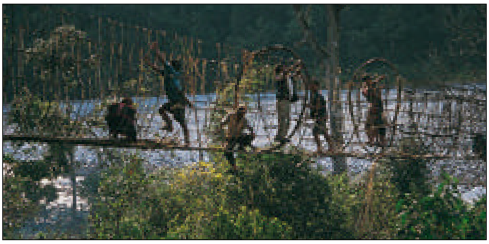
Naga tribal basket

Northeast India is home to an extraordinary diversity of tribal peoples. Arunachal Pradesh alone has 26 major tribes, while Nagaland has 16. Dozens of others inhabit Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya and Tripura. Though living in the same region, they have been geographically isolated from each other by steep mountain ridges, rivers and gorges, and have therefore retained their distinct cultural identities and languages.

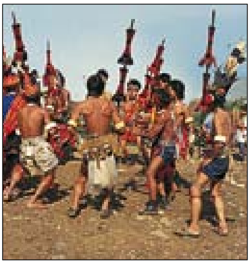

Gigantic stone megaliths *can be seen all over the state of Meghalaya. They were erected by the Khasi tribe as memorials to the dead.*

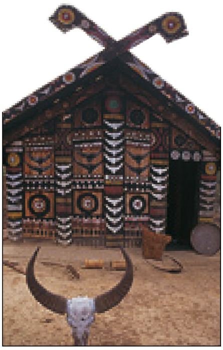
Pipes *of wood and metal are smoked by tribes in Arunachal Pradesh.*

Intricate beadwork, crafted by the Wanchos of Arunachal

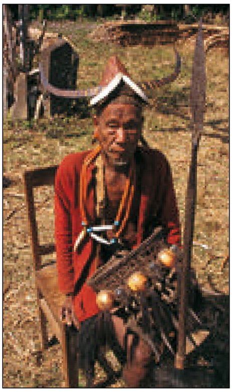

The Adis of Arunachal Pradesh *are famous for their engineering skills and construct superb bridges, such as this tube of canework over the Brahmaputra river.*

The Thankuls of Manipur *are skilled at weaving, producing a distinctive red and white textile with a silken sheen.*


The Konyaks of Nagaland, *who perform spirited martial dances, wear colourful costumes, with hornbill feathers, wild boar tusks and painted canework caps.*

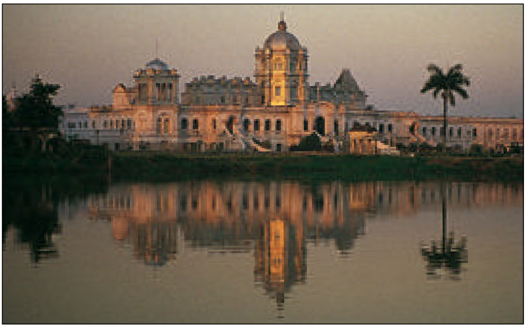


A chief's house *in Nagaland has crossed gables and is decorated with his tribe's symbols. The* mithun *(bison species) skull in the foreground symbolizes power and prosperity.*



This Naga chief *used to be a headhunter. The wooden heads on his basket indicate how many heads he took.*

The Cheraw dance *is performed at tribal festivals in Mizoram. The Mizos love music and dancing, and the Cheraw dance requires women to step agilely between rapidly moving bamboo poles.*

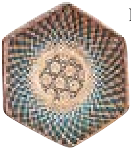


Ujjayanta Palace in Agartala, built in 1901

Agartala ⑬

West Tripura district. 600 km (373 miles) S of Guwahati. 👥 *189,300.* ✈ *12 km (7 miles) N of town centre, then bus or taxi.* 🚌 ℹ *Tripura Tourism, Swet Mahal, Palace Compound, (0381) 222 3893.*

The capital of Tripura, a former princely state bordered by Bangladesh, Agartala is a pleasant little town, its lush tropical greenery dotted with red-brick civic buildings. Dominating the town is the sprawling white **Ujjayanta Palace**, built in 1901 in Indo-Saracenic style. Now the State Legislature, the palace's opulent interior includes a tiled Chinese Room with a magnificent ceiling crafted by Chinese artisans. It is open to visitors when the Assembly is not in session. Tripura is renowned for its exceptionally fine cane and bamboo work, freely available in the market.



Cane basket from Tripura

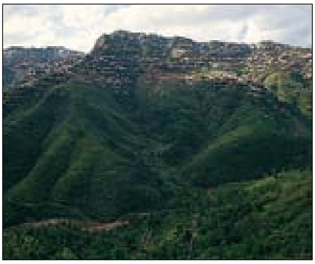
Environs

Neermahal Water Palace, 55 km (34 miles) south of Agartala, on an island in Rudrasagar Lake, was the summer home of the former maharajas of Tripura. Built in white marble and red sandstone, this fairy-tale palace has a profusion of pavilions, balconies, turrets and bridges, and part of it is open to the public. **Udaipur**, 58 km (36 miles) south of Agartala, is renowned for the 16th century **Tripurasundari Temple** with its distinctive Bengal-style roof.

Aizawl ⑭

Aizawl district. 480 km (298 miles) SE of Guwahati. 👥 *229,700.* ✈ *35 km (22 miles) W of town centre, then bus or taxi.* 🚌 ℹ *Mizoram Tourism, Bungkawn, (0389) 233 3475.* **Travel permits** *required* (see p758).

Perched along a ridge, its houses and churches standing out against the green hillside, Aizawl is Mizoram's capital, and home of the Mizo tribes, said to have migrated here from Myanmar's Chin Hills 300 years ago. In the centre of town is the lively **Main Market**, where local farmers congregate. Almost the entire population of Mizoram (as of Nagaland and Meghalaya) is now Christian, converted by missionaries who first came here in 1891. As a result of the schools they started, Mizoram has the second highest literacy rate in India. Blue jeans are more commonly seen today than tribal dress among the men, but the women still wear their elegant *puans* (long, narrow skirts). Visitors can see these being woven at the **Weaving Centre** in Luangmual, 7 km (4 miles) away.



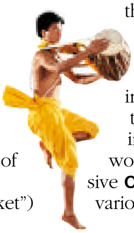
Aizawl, stretching across a ridge

Fish sellers at Imphal's Ima Keithel

Imphal ⓯

Imphal district. 484 km (301) miles SE of Guwahati. 👥 *217,300.* ✈ *6 km (4 miles) S of city centre.* 🚌 ℹ *Manipur Tourism, next to Hotel Imphal, (0385) 232 1285.* 🎪 *Yaosang (Feb/Mar), Lai Haraoba (Apr/May).* **Travel permits** *required* (see p758).

The capital of Manipur (the "Jewelled Land"), Imphal lies in a broad oval valley enclosed by forested hills. Its inhabitants mostly belong to the Meitei tribe. The liveliest part of the town is the **Ima Keithel** ("Mothers' Market") where more than 3,000 women congregate daily to sell fresh produce, fish, grain, canework and handicrafts, including the elegant striped textiles worn by the Meitei women. These formidable Imas, who sport *tikas* of sandalwood paste on their noses, have formed a powerful union and pride themselves on charging fair prices. Imphal's main temple, the **Govindaji Temple**, stands east of the Bazaar, and on festivals associated with Lord Krishna the graceful Manipuri dance *(see p29)* is performed here. Sagol Kangjei, Manipuri polo, is a favourite sport in Imphal (they claim to have invented the game), and an opportunity to see a match should not be missed – the Polo Ground is in the centre of the town. It is a fast and furious game, with the players dressed in dhotis and often riding bareback on the agile Manipuri horses. Two well-tended **Commonwealth War Graves Cemeteries** are on the northern and eastern outskirts of town. Buried here are the men who died fighting the Japanese during the invasion of Manipur in World War II. Also worth visiting is an impressive **Orchidarium** displaying various indigenous species. It is 12 km (7 miles) north of the town.



Manipuri dancer

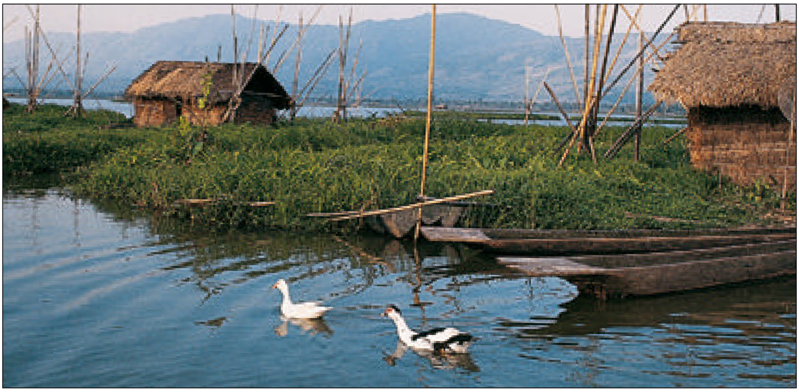
Environs

Moirang, 45 km (28 miles) south of Imphal, with its ancient temple to the pre-Hindu god, Thangjing, is the spiritual home of the Meiteis, who celebrate Lai Haraoba *(see p327)*. During World War II, Moirang was the headquarters of the Indian National Army (INA), led by Subhash Chandra Bose, which fought against the Allies.

Loktak Lake ⓰

Bishnupur district. 48 km (30 miles) S of Imphal. 🚌 ℹ *For bookings on Sendra Island contact Manipur Tourism, (0385) 232 1285.* ⛴ **Travel permits** *required* (see p758).

Loktak Lake is one of the most enchanting places in the northeast. Almost two-thirds of this huge expanse of freshwater is covered by unique floating saucer-shaped islands of reed and humus, locally called *phumdi*, which are home to a community of fishermen. The southern part of the lake forms the **Keibul Lamjao National Park** where contiguous masses of *phumdi* form the very special habitat of the endangered Manipur brow-antlered deer called *sangai*. These deer have divided hooves, specially adapted to their floating habitat, and elegantly curved antlers. Only a 100 or so of these graceful animals are now left, found in the wild only in an area of 6 sq km (2 sq miles) within the park. **Sendra Island**, at the heart of the park, provides a magnificent view of the lake, its islands and its rich birdlife.



Floating islands of reed and humus with fishermen's houses and moored boats, on Loktak Lake

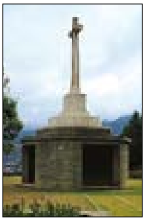
The Baptist Church in Kohima, one of many churches in the area

Boat rides are also offered. However, due to current political instability, only day-trips to Loktak Lake are possible.

Kohima ⑰

Kohima district. 339 km (211 miles) E of Guwahati. *78,600.* *Dimapur, 74 km (46 miles) NW of Kohima, then taxi or bus.* *Nagaland Tourism, (0370) 224 3124.* **Travel permits** *required* (see p758).

The capital of Nagaland, Kohima, at an altitude of 1,500 m (4,921 ft), is a small, pleasant town surrounded by hills which are dotted with villages. Kohima is famous in World War II history for the decisive battle, fought on the tennis court of the British deputy commissioner's house, that finally stopped the Japanese advance into India in April 1944.



War Cemetery, Kohima

Those who fell in the battle are buried in the beautifully kept **War Cemetery** covering a terraced hillside. A poignant inscription at the base of one of the two large crosses here reads: "When you go home tell them of us and say, For your tomorrow we gave our today". The **Cathedral of Reconciliation**, which overlooks the cemetery, was built in 1995, partly funded by the Japanese government.

Kohima's main bazaar is a good place to encounter the handsome Naga people *(see pp336–7)* in their colourful woven shawls, who come from surrounding villages to sell their produce. The market also offers visitors a glimpse of the diet that supposedly made the Nagas such formidable warriors – bees' larvae and dog meat are favourites.

The **State Museum**, 2 km (1.2 miles) north of the bazaar, has an excellent anthropological collection of Naga masks, textiles, jewellery and totem pillars from all the 16 Naga tribes. Particularly intriguing is a large ceremonial drum that looks like a dugout canoe, kept in a shed outside the museum. The drum is engraved with stylized waves, and has gongs that look like paddles. This and other factors, such as the use of seashells in their costumes, has led some anthropologists to conjecture that the Nagas were originally a seafaring people, possibly from Sumatra. Today, a high percentage of Nagas are Christians and a church can be found in almost every corner of the state.

The original village of Kohima, **Bara Basti**, is a settlement of the Angami Naga tribe, located on a hill overlooking the town. Though now considerably modernized, it still has its ceremonial gateway, and a large traditional community house, the *morung*, with crossed horns surmounting its gable. A less modernized Angami Naga village is **Khonoma**, 20 km (12 miles) southwest of Kohima, with its wooden houses, carved gateway and surrounding stone wall. The villagers are known for their agricultural skills – terraced paddy fields cover the hillside, growing 20 varieties of rice, and a system of bamboo pipes irrigates the fields.

State Museum
Tel *(0370) 226 0133* ○ *Mon–Sat.* ● *public hols.*

Dimapur ⑱

Kohima district. 74 km (46 miles) NW of Kohima. *107,400.* *Tourist Office, near Nagaland State Transport Office.* **Travel permits** *required* (see p758).

This bustling town in the plains functions as a gateway to the rest of Nagaland. It was founded by the Kachari rulers, a Tibeto-Burmese people who were displaced from their territories in Assam in the 13th century by the invading Ahoms *(see p332)*. Some of the ruins of their old capital can be seen in the heart of the town. Most notable are 30 carved megaliths, believed to be fertility symbols. About 5 km (3 miles) from the city centre, on the road to Kohima, is the **Ruzaphema Bazaar** which displays a fascinating range of tribal handicrafts.

Carved monoliths in Dimapur erected by the Kachari kings

WESTERN INDIA

INTRODUCING WESTERN INDIA 342–349

RAJASTHAN 350–407

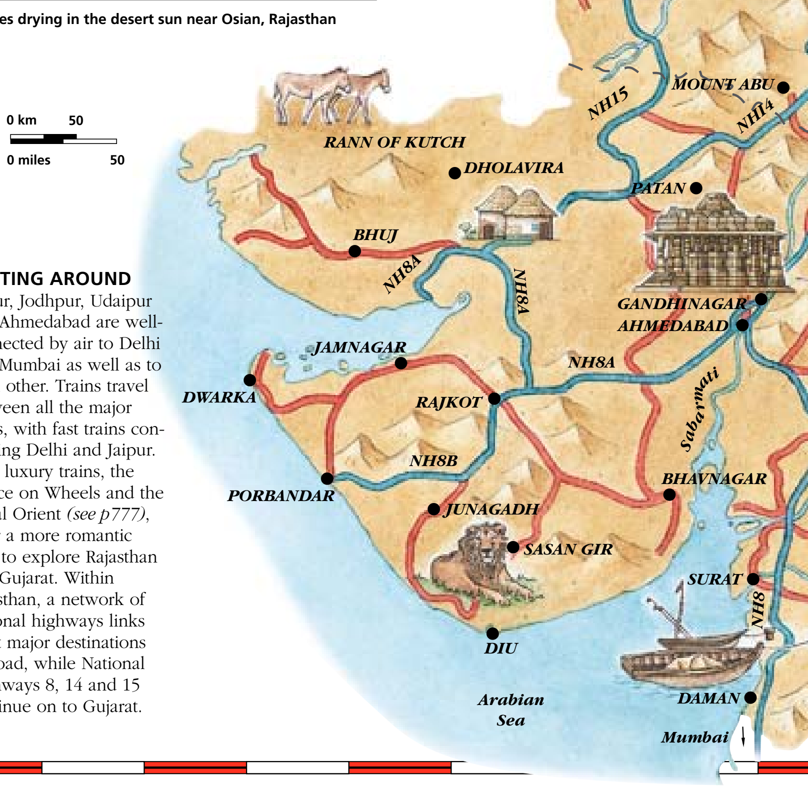
GUJARAT 408–431

Introducing Western India

This region has some of India's most popular destinations. In Rajasthan, the desert forts of Jaisalmer and Jodhpur, the palaces and lakes of Udaipur, and the Ranthambhore National Park evoke all the romance and splendour of the state's princely past. Gujarat's Jain temples and intricately designed stepwells are architectural marvels, while its natural wonders can be enjoyed on the beaches of Diu and at the lion sanctuary at Gir. The landscapes in this region range from the sand dunes of Rajasthan to the vast salt flats of Kutch, to the urban bustle of the two state capitals, Jaipur and Ahmedabad.

Rajasthani women in festive dress at the Pushkar Fair

Chillies drying in the desert sun near Osian, Rajasthan



JAISALMER
BARMER
MOUNT ABU
NH15
NH14
0 km 50
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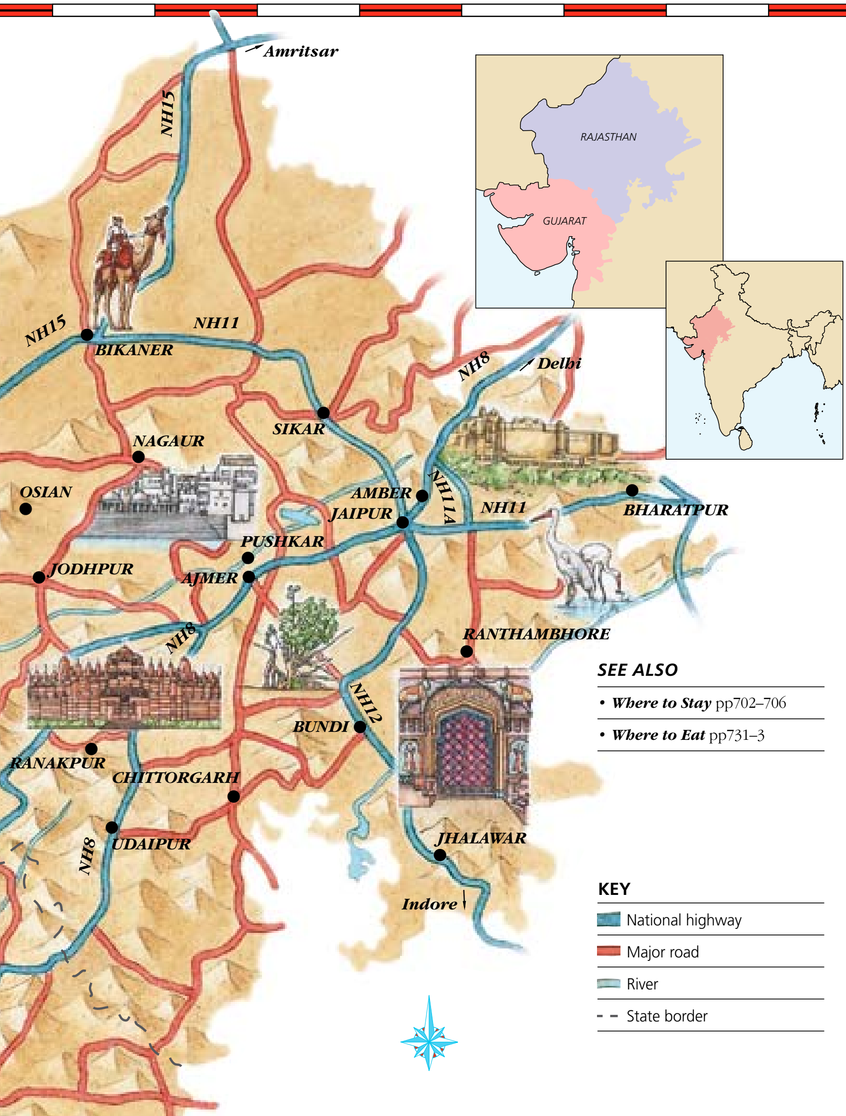
RANN OF KUTCH
DHOLAVIRA
PATAN
BHUJ
NH8A
NH8A
GANDHINAGAR
AHMEDABAD
JAMNAGAR
NH8A
DWARKA
RAJKOT
Sabarmati
NH8B
BHAVNAGAR
PORBANDAR
JUNAGADH
SASAN GIR
SURAT
NH8
DIU
Arabian Sea
DAMAN
Mumbai

GETTING AROUND

Jaipur, Jodhpur, Udaipur and Ahmedabad are well-connected by air to Delhi and Mumbai as well as to each other. Trains travel between all the major cities, with fast trains connecting Delhi and Jaipur. Two luxury trains, the Palace on Wheels and the Royal Orient *(see p777)*, offer a more romantic way to explore Rajasthan and Gujarat. Within Rajasthan, a network of national highways links most major destinations by road, while National Highways 8, 14 and 15 continue on to Gujarat.

◁ **Murals in glowing colours inside the Garh Palace in Bundi *(see p404)*, Rajasthan**


Amritsar
RAJASTHAN
GUJARAT
NH15
NH15
NH11
BIKANER
NH8
Delhi
SIKAR
NAGAUR
OSIAN
AMBER
JAIPUR
NH11A
NH11
BHARATPUR
PUSHKAR
JODHPUR
AJMER
NH8
RANTHAMBHORE
NH12
BUNDI
RANAKPUR
CHITTORGARH
UDAIPUR
NH8
JHALAWAR
Indore
VADODARA
Narmada
Tapti

SEE ALSO

- ***Where to Stay*** pp702–706
- ***Where to Eat*** pp731–3

KEY

▨ National highway

▨ Major road

▨ River

- - State border

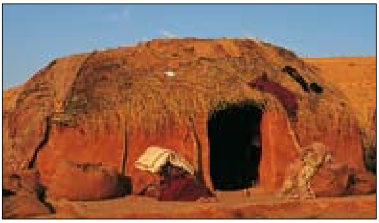
A Rabari nomadic shepherd with his flock in Gujarat

A PORTRAIT OF WESTERN INDIA

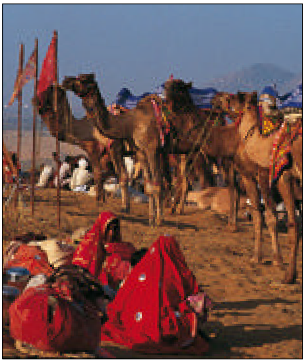
The Great Thar Desert and the Arabian Sea have been two dominating influences in the history and culture of Rajasthan and Gujarat. Both these states have boundaries with Pakistan and, before 1947, contained a number of princely states. In most other respects, however, the two states are a study in contrasts.

A many-splendoured land of fairy-tale palaces and vibrant fairs and festivals, Rajasthan fulfills everyone's favourite fantasies about India. Until Independence in 1947 Rajasthan, literally "the Land of Kings", was indeed just that. It was made up of more than 20 princely states, bastions of royal opulence and feudal pageantry. They were ruled by Rajput clans such as the Kachhawahas of Jaipur, the Rathores of Jodhpur and the Sisodias of Udaipur. Their legacy has helped make the state one of the country's most popular tourist destinations.

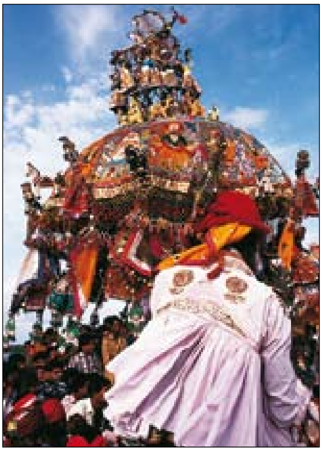
Today, Rajasthan's once-impregnable forts are open to visitors, and many of the old princely palaces and feudal castles have been converted into delightful hotels, often run by the erstwhile ruling families. Tourism has helped restore these historic buildings, and breathed new life into them. Apart from becoming successful hoteliers, many former princes have found new roles for themselves in politics, representing their constituencies in India's parliament. Rajasthan's traditional arts and crafts have also been revived, with tourists replacing maharajas as the new patrons.


A desert nomad's shelter in Rajasthan

Eighty per cent of Rajasthan's population still lives in rural areas, engaged in agriculture and livestock herding. The rhythm of life in the villages continues much as it has for hundreds of years, the drudgery of the daily grind broken every few weeks by religious festivals and cattle fairs, such as those at Pushkar *(see pp374–5)* and Nagaur *(see p376)*. These wonderfully colourful events provide Rajasthani villagers with an occasion for feasting, socializing, trading, and enjoying traditional entertainments such as camel races and puppet shows. The fairs have become a major attraction for visitors as well, offering a close and memorable encounter with the people and culture of rural Rajasthan.


Camels for sale at the Pushkar Fair

Rajasthani society is still socially very conservative, with great value placed on



The Tarnetar Fair in Gujarat

ancient feudal codes of conduct and honour. As recently as 1987, an incident of *sati* took place here, when a young widow burnt herself on her husband's funeral pyre, while the whole village watched in admiration. But things are changing: female literacy in Rajasthan, which was just 20 per cent in the early 1990s has increased at a massive growth rate, and women now head many village government councils. Rural development schemes have brought schools, hospitals and water to remote desert villages. What has still not changed, however, is the old-world courtesy and hospitality encountered everywhere in Rajasthan, be it in a princely palace or a mud hut in the desert.

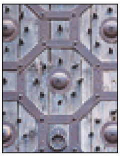
In sharp contrast with Rajasthan, Gujarat is one of the most industrially advanced and urbanized states in the country – nearly 60 per cent of its population lives in cities. The Gujaratis' legendary business acumen has helped make the state one of the most prosperous in India.

While the forbidding expanses of the Thar Desert had for centuries effectively insulated Rajasthani society, Gujarat's 1,600 km (992 miles) of coastline on the Arabian Sea have helped foster contacts with other lands and cultures, and bred an adventurous spirit in the people. Since ancient times, Gujarat has traded with Arabs and Persians, East Africa, China, and Indonesia, through its ports at Surat *(see p420)* and Mandvi *(see p429)*, while from the 15th century onwards European traders established their bases along the coastline. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, many Gujaratis sailed to far off lands in search of new opportunities, and today their descendants (many of them with the surnames Patel and Shah) are flourishing – be it as hoteliers in America, retail traders in Britain, industrialists in Nigeria or lawyers in South Africa.

Gujaratis have been deeply influenced by Jainism *(see p396)*, which took hold in the region in the 11th century, during the reign of the Solanki kings. Jainism's emphasis on non-violence, community service, simple living and high thinking was an integral part of the philosophy of Gujarat's most famous son, Mahatma Gandhi, who led India's struggle for independence *(see p56)*. Ordinary mortals too try to follow this creed in their daily lives. Most Gujaratis, whether at home or abroad, are strict vegetarians, known for their toughness and self reliance, and for their thrift and philanthropy. These qualities were especially evident after the devastating earthquake that hit Gujarat in January 2001 *(see p428)*, from which the state has made a remarkable recovery.

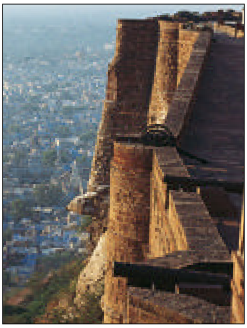
Rajasthani women preparing lunch

Forts and Palaces

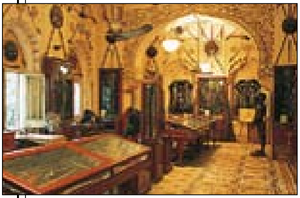


Fort gate with spikes

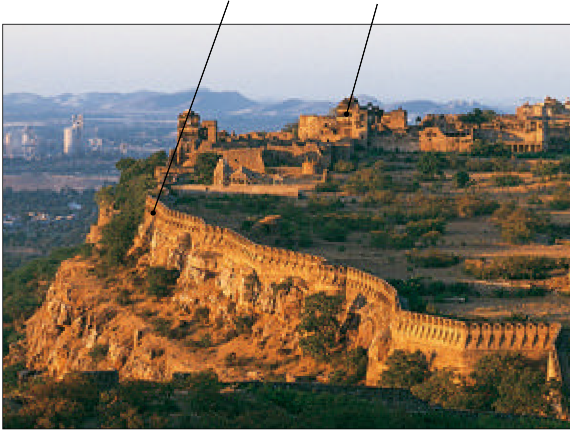
The spectacular forts of Rajasthan were originally forbidding, defensive citadels, but by the mid-16th century, when most Rajput states had made peace with the Mughals, luxurious palaces, pleasure pavilions and gardens were added to them, displaying many Mughal-inspired features. In the early 20th century there was another spate of palace-building in both Rajasthan and Gujarat. As a result of increasing contact between the British Raj and the princely states, a marked European influence in both architecture and decor is visible in these palaces.

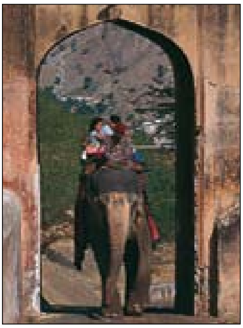


Cannons *to defend the fort are mounted on the bastions, which tower high above the surrounding area.*

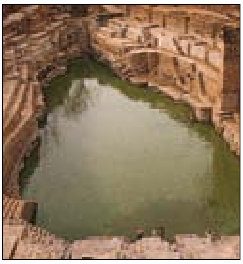


Sileh Khanas *(armouries) store a variety of weapons, from ceremonial jewelled swords to sharp knuckle-dusters, and even special armour for war elephants.*





Entrance gates *are high enough for elephants to pass through. Their doors have huge spikes to prevent enemy elephants from storming them.*



Water reservoirs, *often fed by underground springs, are found in forts in the arid areas of Rajasthan and Gujarat.*

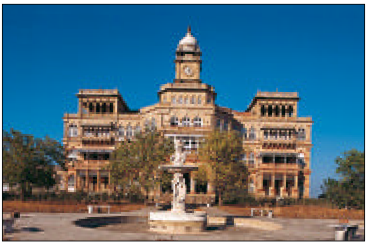
TYPES OF FORTS

Ancient Indian treatises list six types of forts for good defences. While *giri durgs* (hill forts) such as Chittorgarh are the most impregnable, other effective types are *dhanva durg*, protected by desert, such as Jaisalmer *(see pp388–9)*; *vana durg*, protected by forest, such as Ranthambhore *(see p406)*; *mahi durg*, protected by thick mud walls, such as Bharatpur's Lohagarh *(see p367)*; *jala durg*, protected by water, such as Ghagron *(see p403)*; and *nara durg*, a city fort such as Nagaur *(see p376)*, protected mainly by trusted men.

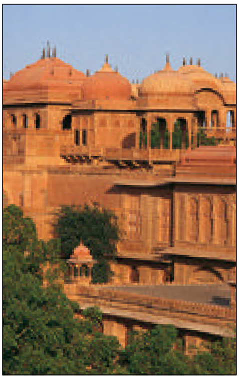
Ghagron Fort in Rajasthan, an example of a fort protected by water

PALACES

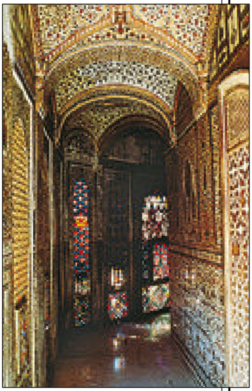
Palaces built by maharajas during the Raj, unlike those in the old forts, had modern plumbing, drawing rooms and dining halls suitable for entertaining British dignitaries.



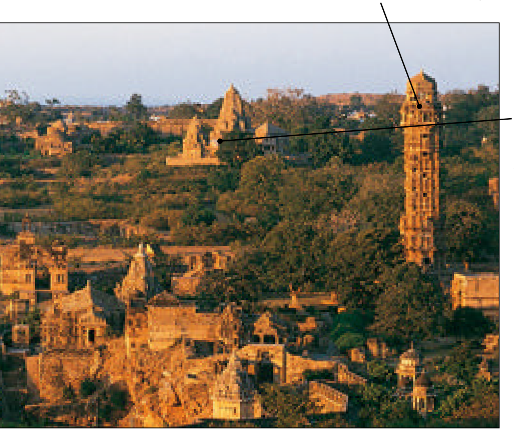
Wankaner Palace (see p427) *was built in 1907. The ruler's travels in Europe gave him a taste for Italianate pillars and Gothic arches, crowned here with Mughal pavilions.*



Lalgarh Palace *in Bikaner* (see p379) *was built in 1902. It beautifully combines Rajput decorative features with European elements, such as banquet halls and billiard rooms.*



Corridors *and staircases, that connect the private chambers in Rajput palaces, are often narrow and twisting to confuse enemy invaders.*

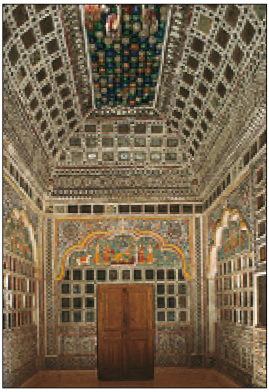


The Victory Tower was built in 1458 after a successful battle. Each of its nine storeys is a temple.

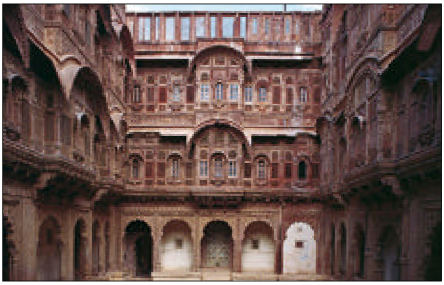
Temples were built by rulers and merchants, who believed their deities protected the fort.

FORTS

Chittorgarh *(see p402)*, founded in AD 728 but added to at various times until the 16th century is, like many Rajput forts, built on a commanding height above the plains. Its massive ramparts encircle palaces, temples, stables and reservoirs.



Sheesh Mahals *("Halls of Mirrors") are ceremonial halls inlaid with mirror mosaic. One candle, reflected in the myriad mirrors, makes the whole room glitter.*



Zenanas *(women's quarters) have secluded courtyards and exquisite stone latticework* (jali) *screens. These let in light and air, yet maintain privacy. Most zenanas are large, because they also housed the rulers' many concubines.*

The Flavours of Western India

Rajasthan, largely scrub and desert and dominated by hill forts of stone, has a simple cuisine dictated by the landscape and climate. As a result, the food here is more robust and strength-giving, as is evident by the creative use of cereals and lentils. The varied palate of Gujarat has emerged from its contact with the different communities who have settled in this state. What is commonly called Gujarati food is vegetarian with the regional variations of North and South Gujarat, Kathaiwar and Kutch. It is a delicate balance of the spicy and sweet and its infinite variety of dishes can be sampled in the Gujarati *thali* (platter).

Bunch of fenugreek

An array of tangy savouries, very popular among Rajasthanis

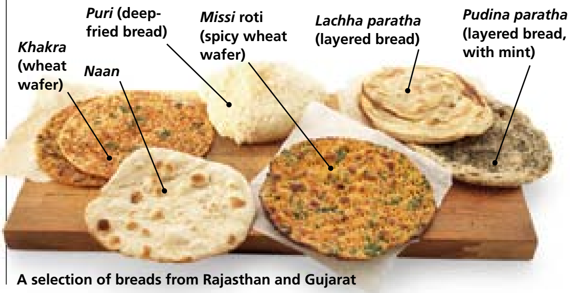
RAJASTHAN

The best-known dish here is *dal-baati*, a lentil curry with wheat-dough balls which can be buried in the sand to bake. The same *baati,* when crumbled and garnished with raisins and almonds, is transformed into a rich sweet called *chorma*. This food can be carried for days through the parched landscape.

In the desert districts, milk, *ghee* (clarified butter) and buttermilk are used to make up for the water scarcity. Other substitutes are *amchur* or dried mango powder, used instead of tomatoes, and asafetida to enhance taste. Desert plants such as *sangri (Prosopsis cineraria)* beans and *khair (Capparis decidua)* have great nutritional value. These are dried and cooked with oil and spices to make *khair-sangri*. Mint, turmeric, mango and garlic chutneys are popular accompaniments.

The cuisine of the martial Rajput clans includes highly seasoned meat dishes. The most famous is *lal maas*, a lamb dish cooked with *ghee* and red chillies. A variation is the *safed maas*, a "white" curry with yoghurt and nuts. *Khud khargosh*, is a summer special where rabbit is stuffed with spices, sealed in dough and roasted in cloth.

Spicy lentils, split peas, peanuts and puffed rice are used in crunchy savoury snacks, such as *bhujia*, *dal-moth* and *khatta-meetha sev*.


Khakra (wheat wafer)
Puri (deep-fried bread)
Naan
Missi roti (spicy wheat wafer)
Lachha paratha (layered bread)
Pudina paratha (layered bread, with mint)

A selection of breads from Rajasthan and Gujarat

LOCAL DISHES AND SPECIALITIES

Khandvi* and *dhokla

Vegetarian food dominates the cuisine of Rajasthan and Gujarat, both states having been strongly influenced by Jainism and Vaishnavism, which forbid animal slaughter. Rajasthan's cereal-based diet includes *kadhi* (lentil and yoghurt soup), types of *khichdi* (rich rice preparations) and breads made from *bajra* (millet) and *jowar* (sorghum maize). Gujarati cuisine uses a wide range of protein-rich lentils, cereals and vegetables, distinguished by wonderfully subtle seasoning. Pickles, often made of *kairi* (green mango), are a basic part of it. Sweets include the seasonal *aamras* (mango fool) and *doodh pak*, made with thick sweetened milk, dried fruit and nuts.

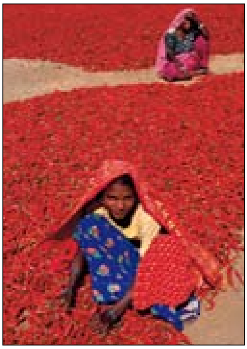
Undhiyo, *a Gujarati* thali *dish, consists of potatoes and aubergines (eggplant) roasted in an earthenware pot.*

Women selling fresh vegetables in a Rajasthan village

GUJARAT

Gujarat has a large Jain community who, as practitioners of non-violence, have developed an extremely refined vegetarian cuisine, rated as one of India's most sophisticated. A typical *thali* contains innumerable small bowls *(katoris)*, filled with vegetables, lentils, *farsaans* (savoury snacks), pickles, chutneys, breads and sweets. This meal allows a person to savour the delicate balance of flavours – sweet and sour, salty and spicy, crisp and soft, low fat and deep-fried.

Bajra (millet) is the staple grain of Gujarat and is used to make the *rotlis* (baked bread) that are eaten with most meals. Another bread is *thepla*, a savoury griddled bread made from chickpea flour. Rice specialities, such as *khichdi* (a nourishing mixture of rice and five kinds of lentils), *vangi bhat*, (rice with aubergines and coriander) and *masala bhat* (spicy rice) are made more tempting by the addition of a dollop of *ghee* at the end.



Young girls gathering red chillies that have been sun-dried

Jaggery or sugar is used to sweeten every dish and the food is usually seasoned with mustard, asafetida and fenugreek, used both for flavour and digestion.

Integral to a meal are crisp *farsaans*, particularly *dhokla* (steamed spongy cakes of chickpea flour and yoghurt), *khandvi* (chickpea flour rolls filled with coconut), *mirchi pakora* (green chilly fritters) and *khakra* (wafers).

Saurashtra is famous for pickles and *methia masala*, made from powdered fenugreek, chillies and salt and used as a salad dressing, while from the bakeries of Surat come wonderful local biscuits, *nankhatais*.

ON THE MENU

Batata nu shak A dry spicy potato preparation.

Besan halwa A sweet made from chickpea flour.

Dahi pakora Lentil dumplings in yoghurt.

Kadhi A light curry made with chickpeas and lentils.

Makki soyta Corn kernels in a spicy sauce.

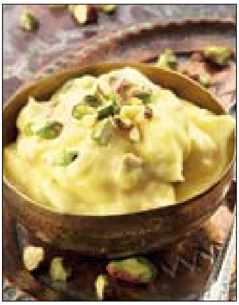
Mattar ki kachori Fried bread stuffed with peas.

Mula ni kadi Yoghurt curry with white radish.

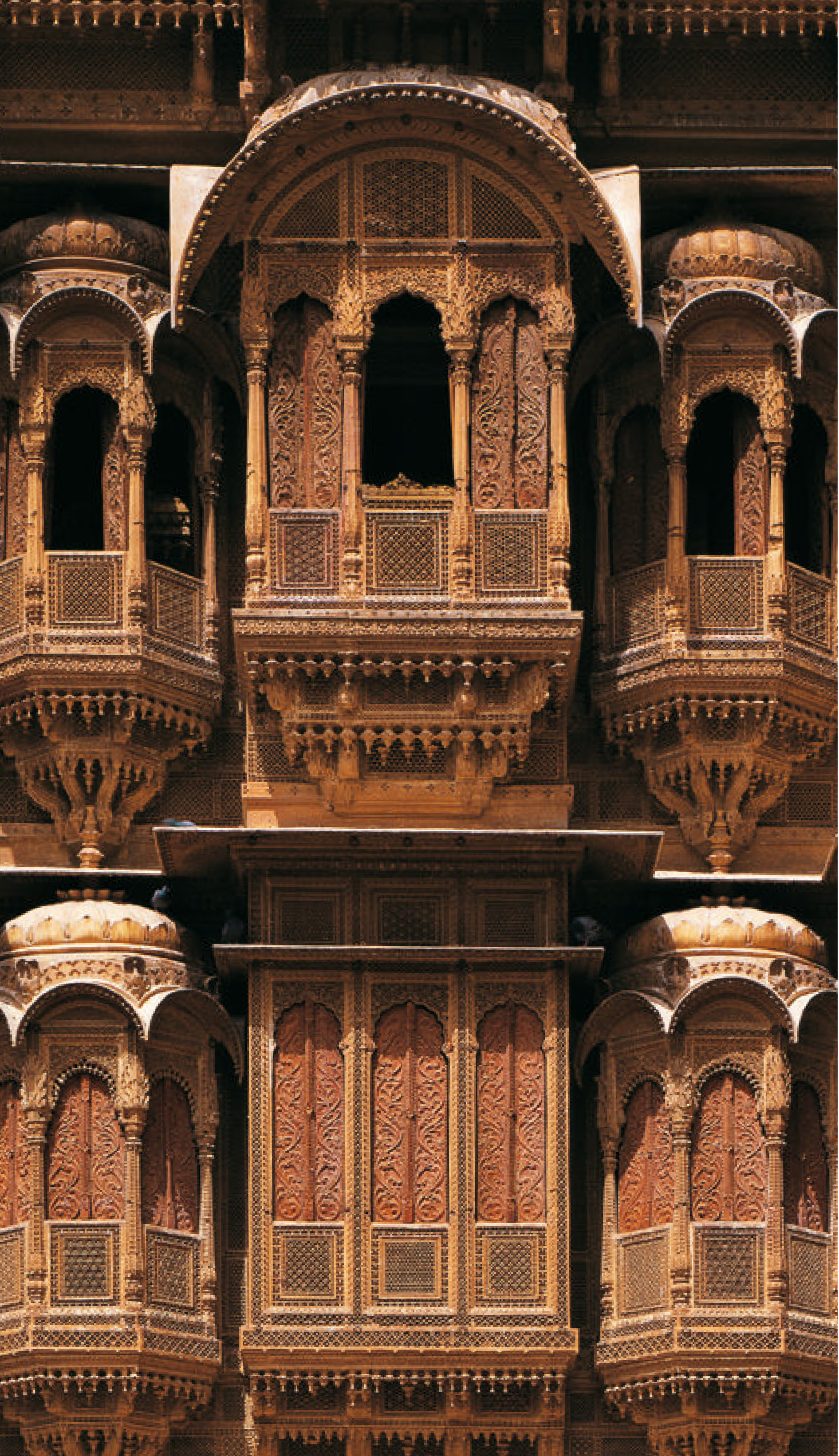
Paunk Mixed vegetables seasoned with lime and jaggery, a winter dish.

Gatta curry *has steamed dumplings made from chickpea flour cooked in a spiced yoghurt sauce.*

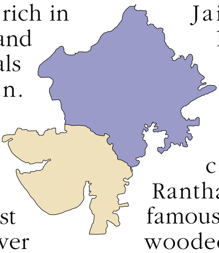
Sulas, *a speciality of Rajput clans, is barbecued meat softened with a paste made from a melon-type fruit.*



Shrikhand *is a dessert made from yoghurt flavoured with saffron, cardamom, nuts and dried fruits.*



RAJASTHAN



No state in India is as rich in magnificent palaces and forts, colourful festivals and bazaars, as Rajasthan. Stretching over 342,000 sq km (132,047 sq miles), the state is bisected by the Aravalli Range, which runs diagonally from the northeast to the southwest. Its main river is the Chambal. The Thar Desert, which covers western Rajasthan, was once ruled by three great kingdoms – Jaisalmer, Jodhpur and Bikaner. Shekhawati, with its painted *havelis*, is in the semi-arid north while the eastern plains have the bustling state capital, Jaipur, and the Ranthambhore National Park, famous for its tigers. In the hilly, wooded south are the fairy-tale palaces, lakes and forts of Udaipur, and the spectacular Jain temples at Ranakpur, and Dilwara in Mount Abu.

SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

Towns, Cities & Districts

- Ajmer
- Alwar ⑥
- Barmer ⑲
- Bharatpur ③
- Bikaner ⑬
- Bundi ㉘
- Dungarpur ㉔
- Jaipur ①
- Jaisalmer ⑰
- Jhalawar ㉖
- Jodhpur ⑮
- Kota ㉗
- Nagaur ⑫
- Phalodi ⑭
- Shekhawati ⑧
- Udaipur ㉓

Forts & Palaces

- Amber Fort ②
- Chittorgarh ㉕
- Deeg ⑤
- Kumbhalgarh ㉒

Temples & Holy Places

- Pushkar ⑩
- Ranakpur ㉑

Hill Stations

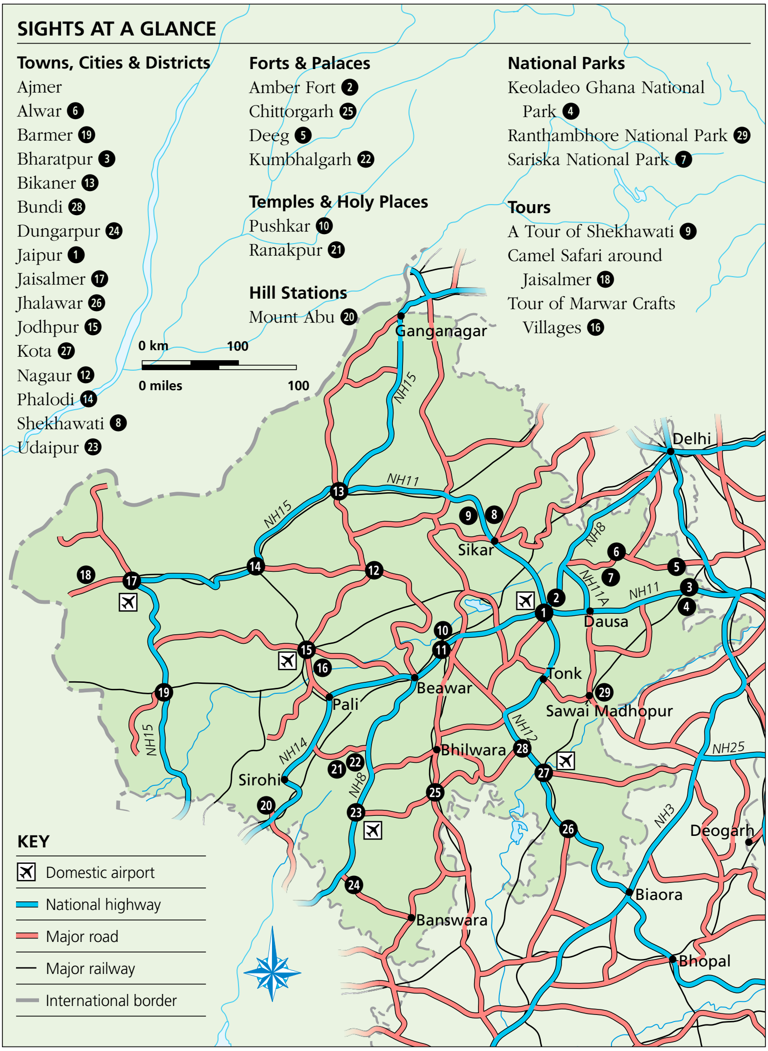
- Mount Abu ⑳

National Parks

- Keoladeo Ghana National Park ④
- Ranthambhore National Park ㉙
- Sariska National Park ⑦

Tours

- A Tour of Shekhawati ⑨
- Camel Safari around Jaisalmer ⑱
- Tour of Marwar Crafts Villages ⑯



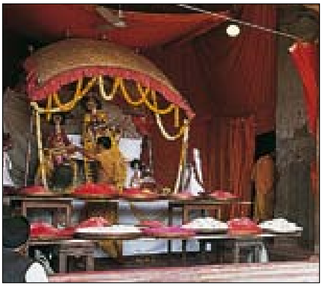
0 km 100
0 miles 100
Ganganagar
NH15
NH11
NH15
Delhi
Sikar
NH8
NH11A
NH11
Dausa
Tonk
Sawai Madhopur
Beawar
Pali
NH14
Sirohi
NH8
NH12
Bhilwara
NH15
NH25
NH3
Deogarh
Biaora
Banswara
Bhopal
KEY
Domestic airport
National highway
Major road
Major railway
International border

◁ **Detail of the exquisitely carved stone façade of the 19th-century Patwon ki Haveli, Jaisalmer**

Jaipur ❶

Stone guardian at Hawa Mahal

A labyrinth of fascinating bazaars, opulent palaces and historic sights, Jaipur is often called the "Pink City" because its prominent buildings are washed in this colour. Tradition and modernity exist side by side here. On its colourful streets, motorbikes jostle for space with camels, and turbaned village elders rub shoulders with youngsters in jeans. Jaipur's old walled area has the City Palace, an astronomical observatory and bazaars that sell everything from shoes to jewellery. Recent additions include a multi-arts centre, but the focal point remains the Hawa Mahal.



Govind Dev Temple, dedicated to Krishna

City Palace Museum

See pp356–7.

Govind Dev Temple

Jaleb Chowk (behind City Palace). ○ *daily.* *Holi (Mar), Janmashtami (Aug/Sep), Annakut (Oct/Nov).*

The presiding deity of this unusual temple is the flute-playing Lord Krishna (also known as Govind Dev). The image of this god originally came from the Govindeoji Temple in Brindavan *(see p179)*. It was brought to Amber *(see pp364–5)*, then the capital of Jaipur's ruling family, in the late 17th century to save it from the iconoclastic zeal of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb.

It is believed that this temple was once a garden pavilion called Suraj Mahal where Sawai Jai Singh II lived while his dream-city, Jaipur, was being built. Legend has it that one night the king awoke from his sleep to find himself in the presence of Krishna who demanded that his *devasthan* ("divine residence") be returned to him. Jai Singh then moved to the Chandra Mahal, at the opposite end of the garden, and installed the image as the guardian deity of Jaipur's rulers.

Just behind the temple is the 18th-century **Jai Niwas Bagh**, a Mughal-style garden with fountains and water channels. Towards the north is the Badal Mahal, an enchanting hunting pavilion.

Chaugan Stadium

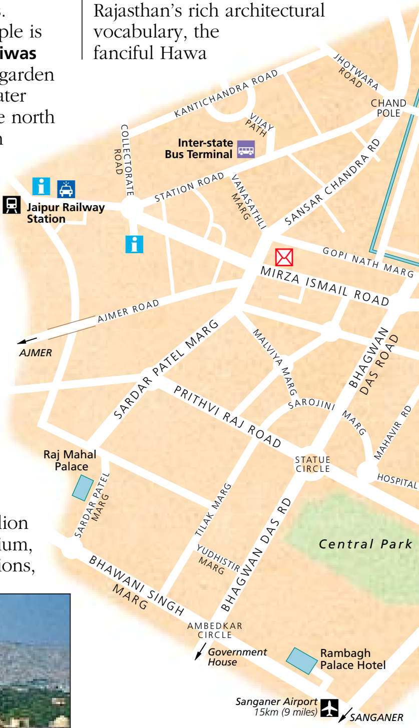
Brahmpuri. ○ *daily.*

This large open area near the City Palace derives its name from *chaugan*, an ancient Persian form of polo played with a curved stick. The area was once used for festival processions and wrestling matches, as well as elephant and lion fights. Today the stadium, with its viewing pavilions, is the venue for the famous Elephant Festival *(see p371)* held at the same time as the Holi celebrations.

Hawa Mahal

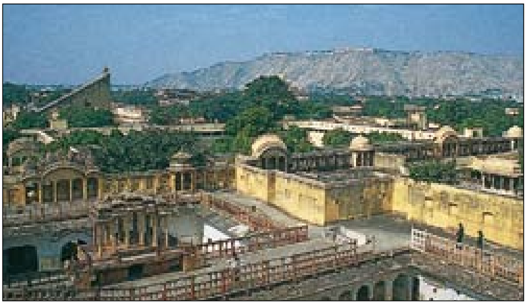
Sireh Deori Bazaar. ***Tel*** *(0141) 266 8862.* ○ *daily.* ● *public hols.* 📷 *extra charges.*

A whimsical addition to Rajasthan's rich architectural vocabulary, the fanciful Hawa


JHOTWARA ROAD
CHAND POLE
KANTICHANDRA ROAD
VIJAY PATH
COLLECTORATE ROAD
Inter-state Bus Terminal
STATION ROAD
VANASATHILI MARG
SANSAR CHANDRA RD
Jaipur Railway Station
GOPI NATH MARG
MIRZA ISMAIL ROAD
AJMER ROAD
AJMER
SARDAR PATEL MARG
MALVIYA MARG
BHAGWAN DAS ROAD
PRITHVI RAJ ROAD
SAROJINI MARG
MAHAVIR RD
Raj Mahal Palace
STATUE CIRCLE
HOSPITAL
SARDAR PATEL MARG
TILAK MARG
Central Park
YUDHISTIR MARG
BHAGWAN DAS RD
BHAWANI SINGH MARG
AMBEDKAR CIRCLE
Government House
Rambagh Palace Hotel
Sanganer Airport 15km (9 miles)
SANGANER

SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

Chaugan Stadium ③
City Palace Museum ①
Government Central Museum ⑤
Govind Dev Temple ②
Hawa Mahal ④
Jantar Mantar ⑥



A view of the walled city of Jaipur

Mahal or "Palace of Winds" was erected in 1799 by the aesthete Sawai Pratap Singh (r.1778–1803). Its ornate pink façade has become an icon for the city. The tiered Baroque-like composition of projecting windows and balconies with perforated screens is five storeys high but just one room deep, its walls not more than 20 cm (8 inches) thick. Built of lime and mortar, the structure was designed in this way to enable the veiled ladies of the harem to observe unnoticed the lively street scenes below. Dedicated to Lord Krishna, the Hawa Mahal, seen from afar, looks like the *mukut* (crown) that often adorns the god's head. Visitors can climb up the winding ramp to the top, and a gateway towards the west leads into the complex. Within are administrative offices and the **Archaeological Museum**, which houses a small collection of sculptures and local handicrafts, including some utensils dating back to the 2nd century BC.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

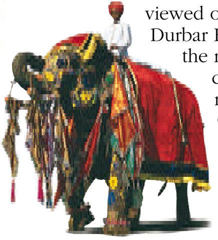
Jaipur district. 261 km (162 miles) SW of Delhi. 👥 *2,324,500.* ✈ *15 km (9 miles) S of city centre.* 🚉 🚌 ℹ *Paryatan Bhavan, Mirza Ismail Rd, (0141) 511 0598.* ○ *Mon–Sat.* 🎉 *Kite Flying Festival (14 Jan), Elephant Festival (Mar), Gangaur (Mar/Apr), Teej (Jul/Aug).*

🏛 Government Central Museum

Ram Niwas Bagh. ***Tel*** *(0141) 256 5124.* ○ *Sat–Thu.* ● *public hols.* 🎟 *free on Mon.*

Also known as Albert Hall, this grand, multi-layered museum was designed by Sir Samuel Swinton Jacob, a master of the Indo-Saracenic style *(see p22)*.

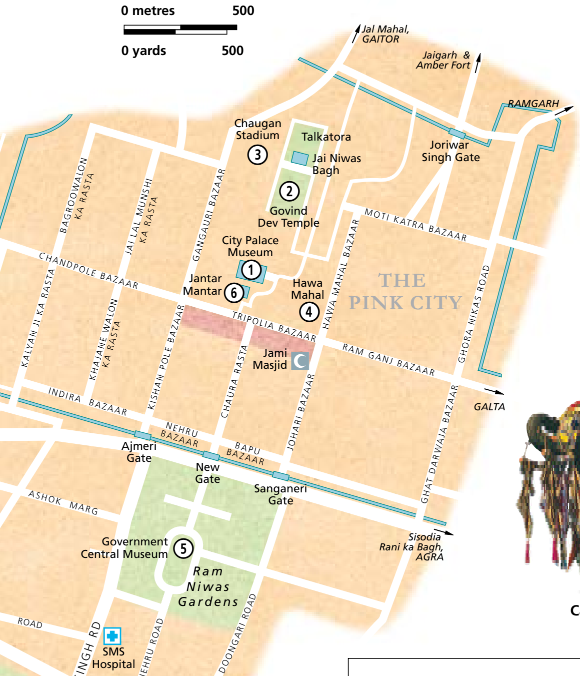
The museum's ground floor displays decorative shields, embossed salvers and local glazed pottery. A 9-m (30-ft) long *phad* (painted cloth scroll), depicts the life of Pabuji, a 14th-century folk hero *(see p381)*. The museum's greatest treasure, however, is one of the world's largest Persian garden carpets (dating from 1632). It can be viewed on request in the Durbar Hall. Presently the museum is closed for renovation. Contact the curator on the exact date of opening.



Caparisoned elephant at a festival

Jantar Mantar

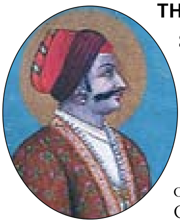
See pp358–9.


0 metres 500
0 yards 500
Jal Mahal, GAITOR
Jaigarh & Amber Fort
RAMGARH
Chaugan Stadium ③
Talkatora
Jai Niwas Bagh
Joriwar Singh Gate
② Govind Dev Temple
BAGROOWALON KA RASTA
JAI LAL MUNSHI KA RASTA
GANGAURI BAZAAR
MOTI KATRA BAZAAR
CHANDPOLE BAZAAR
City Palace Museum ①
Jantar Mantar ⑥
Hawa Mahal ④
HAWA MAHAL BAZAAR
THE PINK CITY
GHORA NIKAS ROAD
KALYAN JI KA RASTA
KHAJANE WALON KA RASTA
KISHAN POLE BAZAAR
TRIPOLIA BAZAAR
Jami Masjid
RAM GANJ BAZAAR
CHAURA RASTA
JOHARI BAZAAR
INDIRA BAZAAR
NEHRU BAZAAR
GALTA
Ajmeri Gate
BAPU BAZAAR
GHAT DARWAJA BAZAAR
New Gate
Sanganeri Gate
ASHOK MARG
Sisodia Rani ka Bagh, AGRA
Government Central Museum ⑤
Ram Niwas Gardens
ROAD
SAWAI RAM SINGH RD
SMS Hospital
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU ROAD
MOTI DOONGARI ROAD
NARAIN SINGH RD
Jawahar Kala Kendra & Moti Doongri Palace

KEY

🟥 Street-by-Street area: *see pp354–5*

THE BUILDING OF JAIPUR

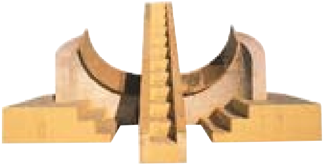


Sawai Jai Singh II (r.1700–43)

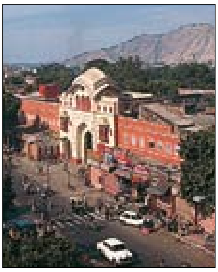
Sawai Jai Singh II was a keen scholar, statesman and patron of the arts. He was awarded the title of "Sawai" ("one-and-a-quarter"), a metaphor for one who is extraordinary, by the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb when he was just 11 years old. With the help of a gifted Bengali engineer, Vidyadhar Chakravarty, Jai Singh built a new capital south of Amber and named it Jaipur ("City of Victory"). Work began in 1727 and took six years to complete. Surrounded by a crenellated wall pierced by seven gates, Jaipur is laid out in a geometric grid of streets and squares and is one of India's finest examples of a planned city.

Street-by-Street: Around Badi Chaupar

The Badi Chaupar ("Large Square") is at one end of the colourful Tripolia Bazaar. Few changes have been made to the original 18th-century plan of streets and squares. Branching out of the main streets are narrow pedestrian lanes where artisans fashion puppets, silver jewellery, and other local handicrafts in tiny workshops. Behind are the *havelis* of eminent citizens, some used as schools, shops and offices. The area is a hub of activity, rich with pungent smells and vibrant colours, with temple bells adding to the cacophony of street sounds.

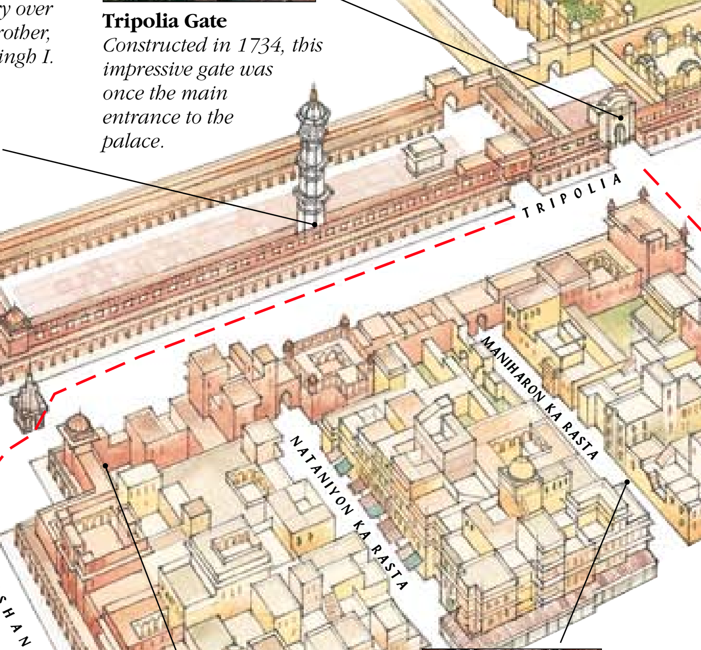


★ Jantar Mantar
Jai Singh II's observatory of astronomical instruments looks like a series of futuristic sculptures (see pp358–9).



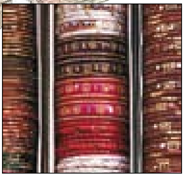
Tripolia Gate
Constructed in 1734, this impressive gate was once the main entrance to the palace.

Ishwar Lat
Ishwari Singh built this tower in 1749 to commemorate his victory over his stepbrother, Madho Singh I.



Chhoti Chaupar ("Small Square") leads to Kishanpol Bazaar, famous for its shops selling rose-, saffron-, almond- and vetiver-flavoured sherbets.

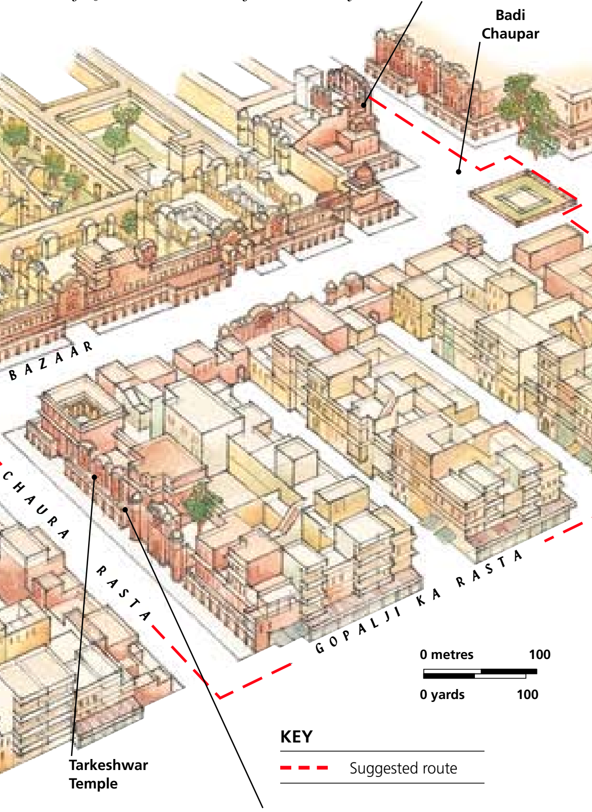
Flower Sellers
Marigolds and other flowers are made into garlands and used as offerings to beloved deities in temples and roadside shrines.



Lac Bangles
Maniharon ka Rasta is full of tiny workshops of lac bangle makers.

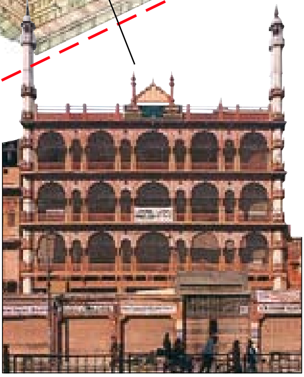
★ Hawa Mahal
A view of Hawa Mahal's unusual rear façade can be seen from the City Palace.

★ Johari Bazaar
Vegetable sellers sit at one end of this street where many big gem dealers also have their offices and shops.


Badi Chaupar
Surajpol
JOHARI BAZAAR
BAZAAR
CHAURA RASTA
GOPALJI KA RASTA
0 metres 100
0 yards 100
Tarkeshwar Temple

KEY

- - - Suggested route



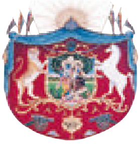
Jami Masjid
Tall minarets define the "Friday Mosque", its three storeys fronted by arched screens.

Pottery Shop
Large terracotta urns, pots of all sizes, bells, statues, foot-scrapers and oil lamps made by traditional craftsmen are sold here.

STAR SIGHTS

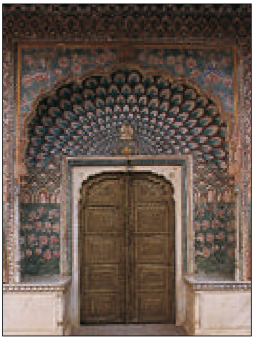
- ★ Jantar Mantar
- ★ Hawa Mahal
- ★ Johari Bazaar

Jaipur: City Palace Museum



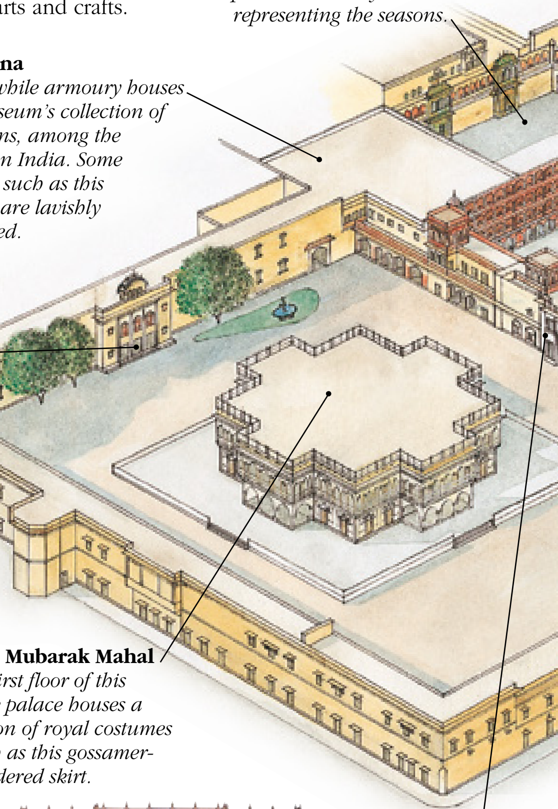
Jaipur's coat of arms

Occupying the heart of Jai Singh II's city, the City Palace has been home to the rulers of Jaipur since the first half of the 18th century. The sprawling complex is a superb blend of Rajput and Mughal architecture, with open, airy Mughal-style public buildings leading to private apartments. Today, part of the complex is open to the public as the Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum, popularly known as the City Palace Museum. Its treasures, which include miniature paintings, manuscripts, Mughal carpets, musical instruments, royal costumes and weaponry, provide a splendid introduction to Jaipur's princely past, and its fascinating arts and crafts.



★ Pritam Chowk
The "Court of the Beloved" has four delicately painted doorways representing the seasons.

Sileh Khana
The erstwhile armoury houses the museum's collection of weapons, among the finest in India. Some pieces, such as this shield, are lavishly decorated.

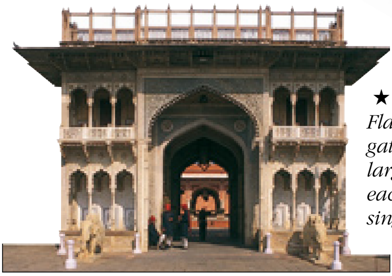


Crafts demonstration area

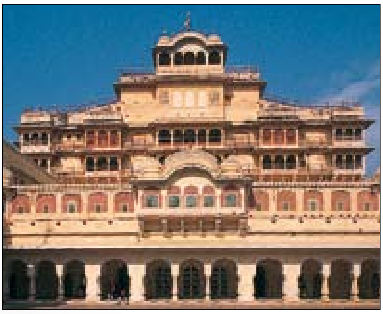
★ Mubarak Mahal
The first floor of this sandstone palace houses a dazzling collection of royal costumes and textiles, such as this gossamer-fine gold-embroidered skirt.

STAR FEATURES

- ★ Pritam Chowk
- ★ Mubarak Mahal
- ★ Rajendra Pol
- ★ Silver Urns



★ Rajendra Pol
Flanking this gateway are two large elephants, each carved from single blocks of marble.

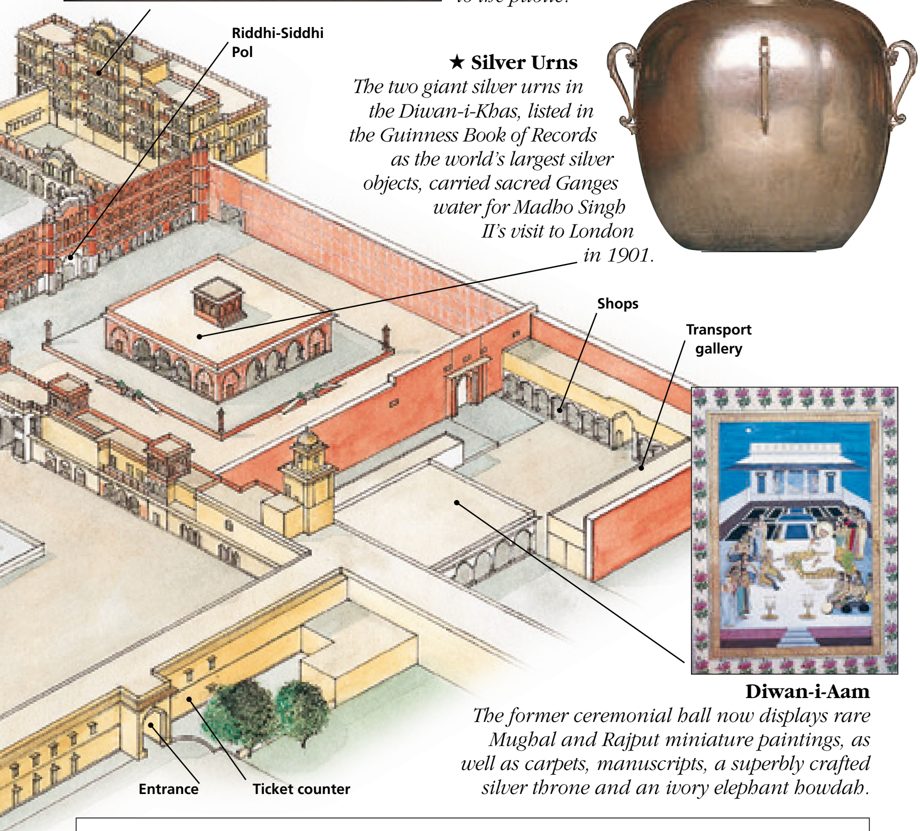


Chandra Mahal

Each floor of this seven-storeyed palace is extravagantly decorated and has a specific name according to its function. The palace is closed to the public.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

City Palace Complex. ***Tel*** *(0141) 260 8055.* ○ *daily.* ● *public hols.* 💰 *Museum and Jaigarh Palace only.* 📷 *façades only, extra charges for video photography.* ☞ 🛍 **Crafts demonstration area** ○ *daily.* ● *public hols.*

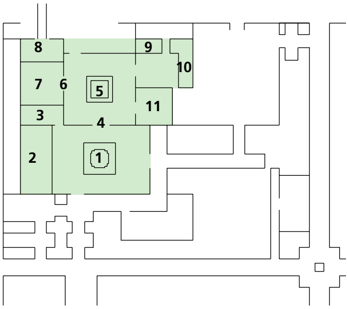


★ Silver Urns

The two giant silver urns in the Diwan-i-Khas, listed in the Guinness Book of Records as the world's largest silver objects, carried sacred Ganges water for Madho Singh II's visit to London in 1901.

Diwan-i-Aam

The former ceremonial hall now displays rare Mughal and Rajput miniature paintings, as well as carpets, manuscripts, a superbly crafted silver throne and an ivory elephant howdah.



THE CITY PALACE

1 Mubarak Mahal
2 Crafts Demonstration Area
3 Sileh Khana
4 Rajendra Pol
5 Diwan-i-Khas
6 Riddhi-Siddhi Pol
7 Pritam Chowk
8 Chandra Mahal
9 Shops
10 Transport Gallery
11 Diwan-i-Aam

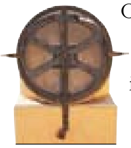
KEY

🟩 Area illustrated

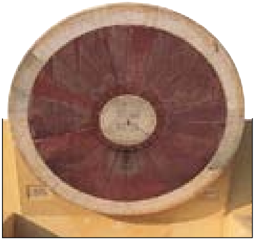
0 metres 200

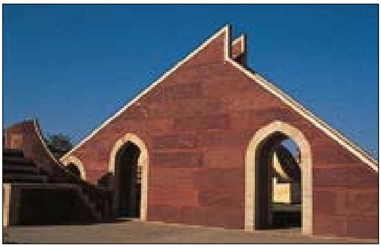
0 yards 200

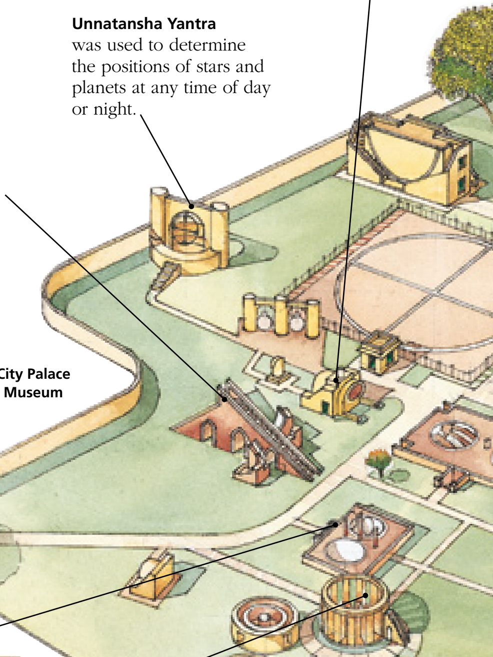
Jaipur: Jantar Mantar

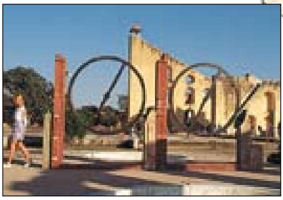

Kantivrita Yantra

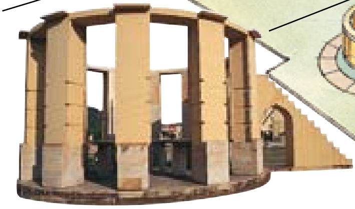
Of the five observatories built by Sawai Jai Singh II, the one in Jaipur is the largest and best preserved; the others are in Delhi *(see p78)*, Ujjain, Mathura and Varanasi. A keen astronomer himself, Jai Singh kept abreast of the latest astronomical studies in the world, and was most inspired by the work of Mirza Ulugh Beg, the astronomer-king of Samarkand. Built between 1728 and 1734, the observatory has been described as "the most realistic and logical landscape in stone", its 16 instruments resembling a giant sculptural composition. Some of the instruments are still used to forecast how hot the summer months will be, the expected date of arrival, duration and intensity of the monsoon, and the possibility of floods and famine.

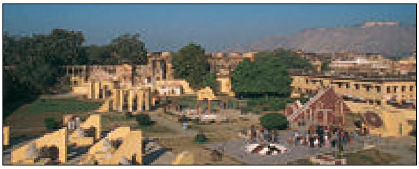

Narivalaya Yantra
Inclined at 27 degrees, these sundials represent the two hemispheres and calculate time by following the solar cycle.


Laghu Samrat Yantra
This "small sundial" is constructed on Latitude 27° North (Jaipur's latitude) and calculates Jaipur's local time up to an accuracy of 20 seconds.


Unnatansha Yantra was used to determine the positions of stars and planets at any time of day or night.


Chakra Yantra
A brass tube passes through the centre of these two circular metal instruments. They can be used to calculate the angles of stars and planets from the equator.


★ Ram Yantra
Vertical columns support an equal number of horizontal slabs in the two identical stone structures that comprise this instrument. Its readings determine the celestial arc from horizon to zenith, as well as the altitude of the sun.

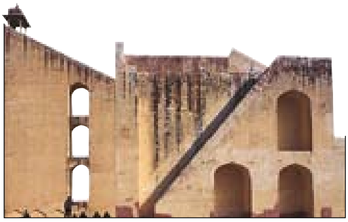


A view of Jantar Mantar

The complex of stone and metal instruments was repaired with the addition of marble inlay comissioned by Madho Singh II in 1901.

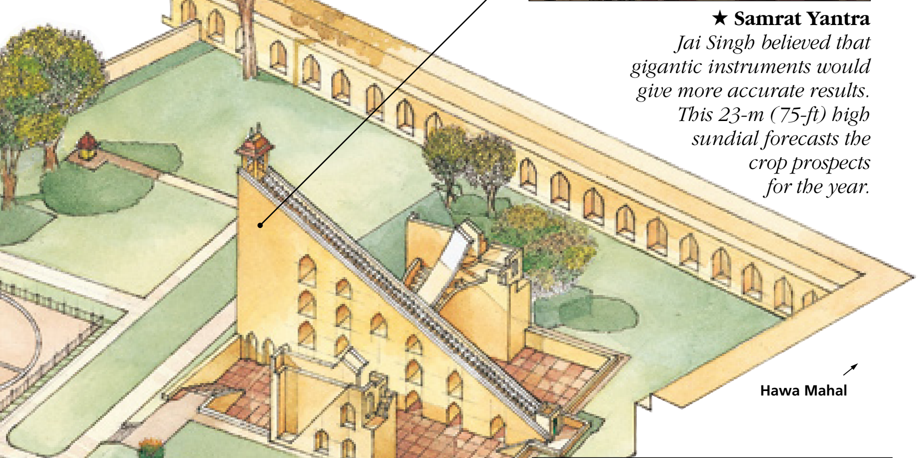
VISITORS' CHECKLIST

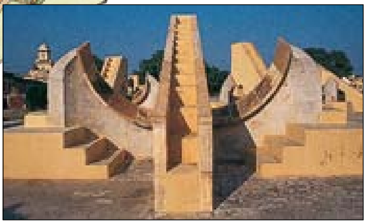
Chandni Chowk, outside City Palace. ***Tel*** *(0141) 261 0494.* ○ *daily.* ● *public hols.* 🎟 *free on Mon.* 📷 *extra charges.* ♿ 🚻



★ Samrat Yantra

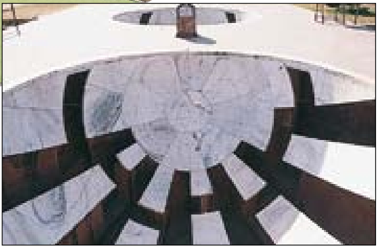
Jai Singh believed that gigantic instruments would give more accurate results. This 23-m (75-ft) high sundial forecasts the crop prospects for the year.





Rashivalaya Yantra

This is composed of 12 pieces, each of which represents a sign of the zodiac and therefore faces a different constellation. This yantra *(instrument), used by astrologers to draw up horoscopes, is the only one of its kind.*



★ Jai Prakash Yantra

These two sunken hemispheres map out the heavens. Some historians believe that Jai Singh invented this instrument himself, to verify the accuracy of all the other instruments in the observatory.

STAR FEATURES

- ★ Ram Yantra
- ★ Samrat Yantra
- ★ Jai Prakash Yantra

Jaipur: South of the Walled City

By the end of the 19th century, Jaipur had expanded far beyond the boundaries of the walled city established by Sawai Jai Singh II. Many new pleasure palaces, hunting lodges and mansions came up on its outskirts, making the city a harmonious blend of old and new.

Lakshmi Narayan Temple, a white marble addition to the Pink City

Moti Doongri Palace

Jawaharlal Nehru Marg.
● *to the public.*

Moti Doongri palace, perched on a low hillock, owes its florid exterior to Sawai Man Singh II, who converted the old fort of Shankargarh into a palace, and added turrets in the style of a Scottish castle. In 1940 he married the beautiful Princess Gayatri Devi of Cooch Behar, and this palace with its modernized interior became the venue for glittering parties hosted by the glamorous couple.

At the foot of Moti Doongri is the white marble **Lakshmi Narayan Temple**, a popular place of worship, admired for its elaborate carvings.

Rambagh Palace

Bhawani Singh Rd. ***Tel*** *(0141) 221 1919.* 🍴 *open to non-residents.*

The Rambagh Palace, now a splendid hotel *(see p703)*, has a colourful past. Built in 1835, it was originally a small garden pavilion for Ram Singh II's wet nurse, but was used as a hunting lodge after she died in 1856. Later, on his return from England, Ram Singh II's son Madho Singh II transformed it into a royal playground with squash and tennis courts, a polo field and an indoor swimming pool. In 1933, it became the official residence of Madho Singh's adopted heir, Man Singh II, who hired Hammonds of London to redo the interiors. New additions included an exotic red and gold Chinese room, black marble bathrooms, Lalique crystal chandeliers and an illuminated dining table. Surrounded by fairy-tale gardens, it became a hotel in 1957, when Man Singh II moved to the smaller Raj Mahal Palace.

Raj Mahal Palace

Sardar Patel Marg. ***Tel*** *(0141) 510 5665.* 🍴 *open to non-residents.*

Now a grand heritage hotel, this pleasant 18th-century palace, less opulent than the Rambagh Palace, occupies a special place in the history of Jaipur. Built in 1739 for Sawai Jai Singh II's favourite queen, Chandra Kumari Ranawatji, it was used as a summer resort by the ladies of the court. In 1821, it was declared the official home of the British Resident in Jaipur. However, the most memorable phase of its history dates to the time when Man Singh II and Gayatri Devi moved here from Rambagh Palace in 1956. Among the celebrities they entertained were Prince Philip, the polo player like Man Singh II, and Jackie Kennedy.

Jawahar Kala Kendra

Jawaharlal Nehru Marg. ***Tel*** *(0141) 270 5879.* ○ *daily.* ☕ 🚻

Designed by the Indian architect Charles Correa in 1993, this remarkable building pays vivid tribute to contemporary Indian design. Imaginatively patterned after the famous grid system of the city, each of its nine squares or courts houses a small *mahal,* or palace, named after a planet. Each one displays selected exhibits of textiles, handicrafts and weaponry, while in the centre there is a wonderfully conceived open-air plaza where performances of traditional Rajasthani music and dance are held.

Jawahar Kala Kendra

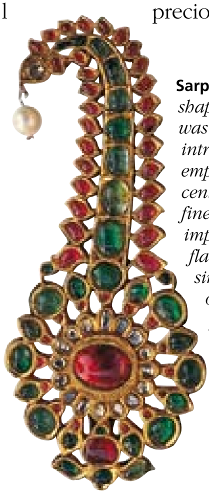
The luxurious interior of Rambagh Palace, now a hotel

Jaipur Jewellery

A *kundankari* pendant

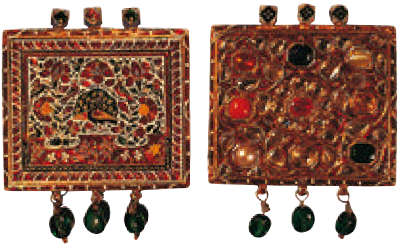
Be it the fabulous rubies and emeralds sported by former maharajas and their queens or the splendid silver and bone ornaments worn by peasants, jewellery is an integral part of Rajasthani culture. Even camels, horses and elephants have specially designed anklets and necklaces. Jaipur is one of the largest ornament-making centres in India, and *meenakari* (enamel work) and *kundankari* (inlay work with gems) are the two traditional techniques for which it is most famous. In the 16th century, Man Singh I *(see p364)*, influenced by the prevailing fashions of the Mughal court, brought five Sikh enamel workers from Lahore to his state. Since then, generations of highly skilled jewellers have lived and worked here. Jaipur caters to every taste, from chunky silver ornaments to more sophisticated designs intricately set in gold with precious stones.

A jewelled trinket box *with a* kundankari *lid; the lower portion of this box is worked in fine* meenakari *and has traditional floral patterns in red, blue, green and white.*



Sarpech, *the cypress-shaped turban ornament, was a fashion statement introduced by the Mughal emperors in the early 17th century to display their finest gems. Rajput rulers, impressed by Mughal flamboyance, sported similar dazzling ornaments such as this piece of enamelled gold set with emeralds, rubies, diamonds and sapphires, finished with a pearl drop.*

The skill of stone-setting *can be seen in the crowded alleys of Haldiyon ka Rasta, Jadiyon ka Rasta and Gopalji ka Rasta. An inherited art, the jewellery trade is in the hands of artisans' guilds.*



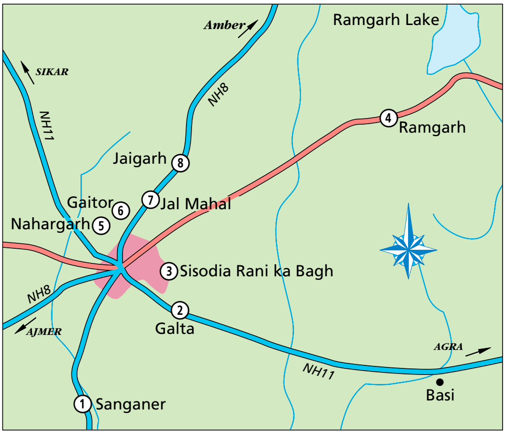
Meenakari *embellishes the obverse side of* kundan *jewellery, for the Rajasthani love of adornment decrees that even the back of a piece of jewellery (left) must be as beautiful as the front (right).*

Kundankari *uses highly refined gold as a base, which is then inlaid with lac and set with precious and semi-precious stones to provide colour and design. Purified gold wire outlines the design and also conceals the lac background.*

Jaipur *is now a centre of lapidary, specializing in cutting emeralds and diamonds from Africa, South America and various regions of India. Gem-cutters learn their skill by cutting garnets.*

Exploring Jaipur: Outer Sites

A parallel range of hills runs along Jaipur's eastern periphery, from Sanganer in the south up to Amber and beyond, enclosing a narrow valley. Consisting of thickly wooded slopes and rocky terrain, this was the area where the nobility built temples, gardens, pavilions and palaces. Perched high above the city are the dramatic fortresses of Nahargarh and Jaigarh that guarded the approach to both Amber and the new capital of Jaipur. The surrounding region also has the remains of fortified walls, temples, *havelis* and the marble cenotaphs of the Kachhawaha kings of Amber and Jaipur.



SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

Gaitor ⑥
Galta ②
Jaigarh ⑧
Jal Mahal ⑦
Nahargarh ⑤
Ramgarh ④
Sanganer ①
Sisodia Rani ka Bagh ③

KEY

- 🟥 Jaipur city centre
- ▬ National highway
- ▬ Major road

0 kms 25

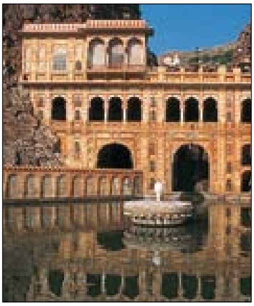
0 miles 25

Marble statue of a Jain *tirthankara* at Sanganer's Sanghiji Temple

Sanganer

Jaipur district, 15 km (9 miles) SW of Jaipur.

This colourful town is famous for its blockprinted cotton. Today most of its printers and dyers belong to a guild, with retail outlets selling reasonably priced fabrics. Sanganer owes its success as a printing centre to a rivulet whose waters have a mineral content that fixes dyes. Sanganer is also a centre of handmade paper, and of Jaipur's renowned, hand-painted Blue Pottery, of which vases and tiles with delicate Persian, Turkish and Indian designs are made. Tucked away in the old walled town is the impressive 11th-century Jain **Sanghiji Temple**, lavishly decorated with carvings. Sanganer is now a busy suburb of Jaipur city and houses the city's airport.



A sacred tank in Galta

Galta

Jaipur district. 10 km (6 miles) E of Jaipur.

This picturesque gorge cradles Galta Kund, an 18th-century religious site with two main temples and a number of smaller shrines. Its seven sacred tanks, fed by natural spring water, are said to have curative powers. Two pavilions on either side of the complex have well-preserved frescoes. The Surya Temple, high on the ridge, provides spectacular views of Jaipur.

Sisodia Rani ka Bagh

Jaipur district. Purana Ghat. 6 km (4 miles) E of Jaipur. ***Tel*** *(0141) 264 0594.* ○ *daily.*

This terraced garden was laid out in the 18th century for Sawai Jai Singh II's second

The picturesque Jal Mahal, seemingly afloat during the monsoon

wife, who married him on the condition that her son would succeed to the throne. To escape the inevitable palace intrigues, the queen moved to a more private home outside the walled city. Her little double-storeyed palace, decorated with lively murals, is surrounded by beautiful gardens. It is today a popular location for Indian films.

Ramgarh

Jaipur district. 40 km (25 miles) E of Jaipur.

Ramgarh is the site of one of the earliest Kachhawaha fortresses. The fort was built by the dynasty's founder, Duleh Rai (r.1093–1135), who also built a temple dedicated to the goddess Jamvai Mata, now visited by thousands of devotees. Ramgarh Lodge, on the northern bank of a man-made lake, is an elegant French villa-style hunting lodge built in 1931 for the Jaipur royal family. It is now a pleasant heritage hotel with one of the best polo grounds in the country.

Nahargarh

Jaipur district. 9 km (6 miles) NW of Jaipur. ***Tel*** *(0141) 253 0293.* ○ *daily.* ● *public hols.* 💰 ☕ 🚻

The forbidding hill-top fort of Nahargarh ("Tiger Fort") stands in what was once a densely forested area. The fierce Meena tribe ruled this region until they were defeated by the Kachhawahas. Its fortifications, strengthened by Sawai Jai Singh II, were subsequently expanded by successive rulers. Madho Singh II added a lavish palace called Madhavendra Bhavan for his nine queens. Laid out in a maze of terraces and courtyards, it has a cool, airy upper chamber from which the ladies of the court could view the city. Its walls and pillars are an outstanding example of *arayish*, a form of plaster work that is hand-polished with a piece of agate to produce a marble finish.

Gaitor

Jaipur district. 8 km (5 miles) N of Jaipur. ○ *daily.* ● *public hols.*

The marble cenotaphs of the Kachhawaha kings are enclosed in a walled garden just off the Amber road. This area was chosen by Sawai Jai Singh II as the new cremation site after Amber *(see pp364–5)* was abandoned. Ornate carved pillars support the marble *chhatris* erected over the platforms where the maharajas were cremated. One of the most impressive cenotaphs in the complex is that of Jai Singh II himself. It has 20 marble pillars carved with religious and mythological scenes and is topped by a white marble dome. The most recent cenotaph was erected in 1997 in memory of Jagat Singh, the only son of Sawai Man Singh II and Gayatri Devi.

Jal Mahal

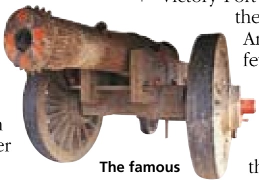
Jaipur district. 8 km (5 miles) N of Jaipur. ○ *daily.*

During the monsoon, water fills the Man Sagar lake, and the Jal Mahal ("Water Palace") seems to rise from it like a mirage. Built in the mid-18th century by Madho Singh I, it is inspired by the Lake Palace at Udaipur, where the king spent his childhood. It was later used for royal duck-shooting parties, and a variety of water birds are still seen here. The terraced garden, enclosed by arched passages, has elegant semi-octagonal towers capped by cupolas in each corner.

Jaigarh

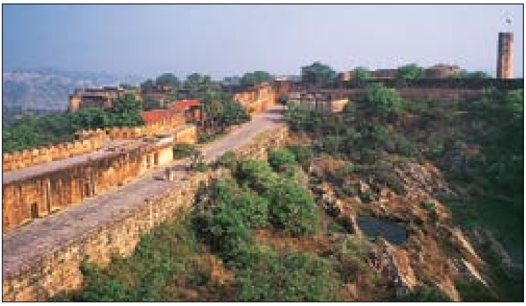
Jaipur district. 12 km (8 miles) NW of Jaipur. ***Tel*** *(0141) 267 1848.* ○ *9am–4:30pm.* ● *public hols.* 💰

Legendary Jaigarh, the "Victory Fort", watches over the old capital of Amber. One of the few surviving cannon foundries is located here. Its most prized possession is the monumental 50-tonne Jai Van, cast in 1726 and said to be the world's largest cannon on wheels. Ironically, despite its impressive size, the cannon has never been fired.



The famous Jai Van

Other interesting sights are the Diva Burj, a seven-storeyed tower where a huge oil lamp was lit on the king's birthday, two temples and a palace built over 200 years ago.



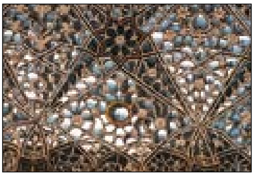
The ramparts of Jaigarh Fort, a feat of military engineering

Amber Fort ❷

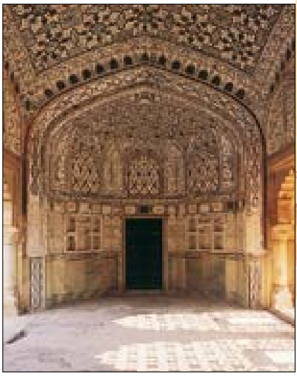
Detail of door at Shila Devi

The fort palace of Amber was the Kachhawaha citadel until 1727, when their capital moved to Jaipur. Successive rulers continued to come here on important occasions to seek the blessings of the family deity, Shila Devi. The citadel was established in 1592 by Man Singh I on the remains of an old 11th-century fort, but the various buildings added by Jai Singh I (r.1621–67) are what constitute its magnificent centrepiece.

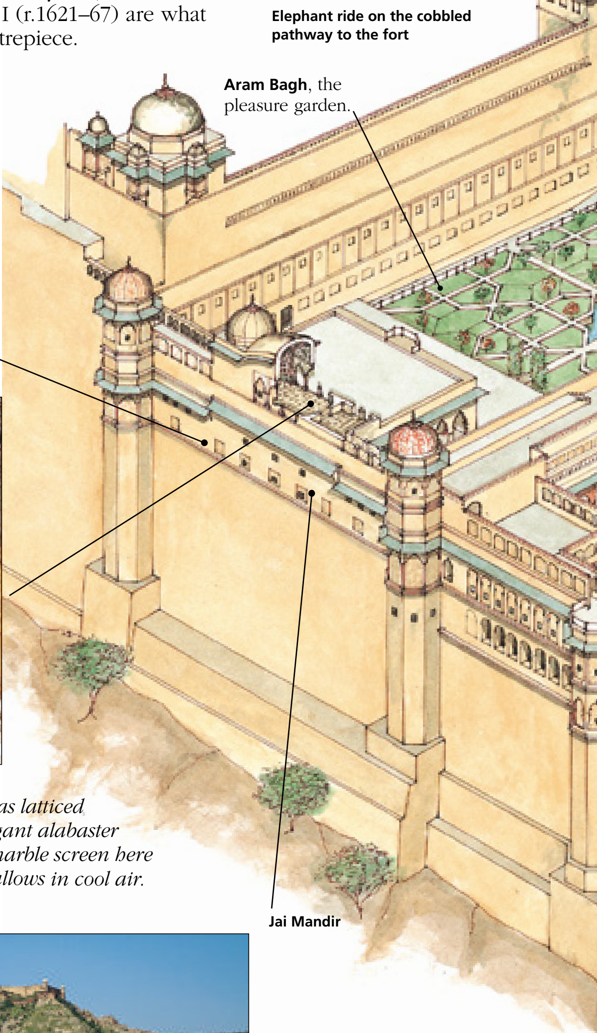
Elephant ride on the cobbled pathway to the fort



★ Sheesh Mahal
The flame of a single candle, reflected in the tiny mirrors embedded in this chamber, transforms it into a starlit sky.



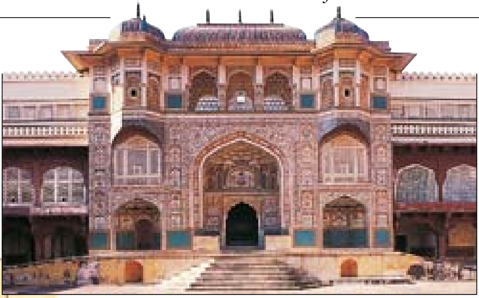
Jas Mandir
This Hall of Private Audience has latticed windows, a floral ceiling of elegant alabaster relief work and glass inlay. A marble screen here overlooks the Maota Lake and allows in cool air.


Aram Bagh, the pleasure garden.
Jai Mandir

A view of Amber Fort
Protected by Jaigarh Fort, the massive ramparts of Amber Fort follow the contours of a natural ridge.

STAR FEATURES

- ★ Sheesh Mahal
- ★ Ganesh Pol
- ★ Shila Devi Temple



★ Ganesh Pol

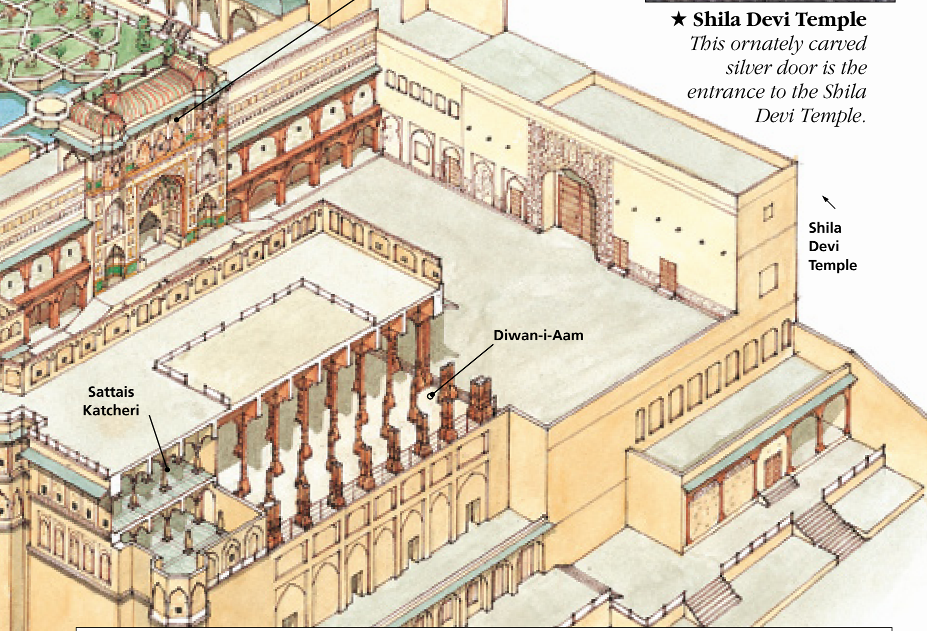
This shimmering three-storeyed gateway, built in 1640, is connected to the private apartments by the screened uppermost level, meant for ladies in purdah.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

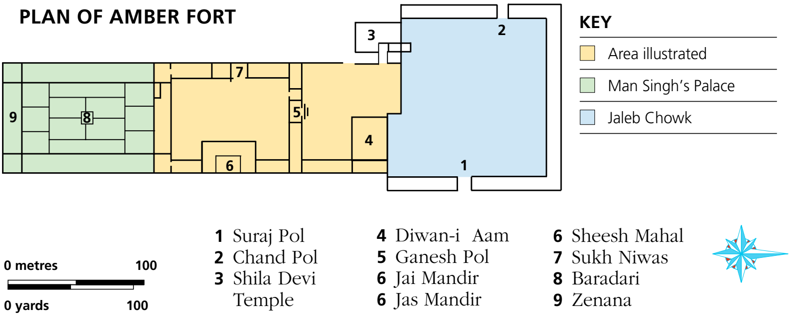
Jaipur district.11 km (7 miles) N of Jaipur. ***Tel*** *(0141) 253 0293.* ○ *8am–5:30pm daily.* ● *public hols.*

★ Shila Devi Temple

This ornately carved silver door is the entrance to the Shila Devi Temple.


Sukh Niwas
Shila Devi Temple
Diwan-i-Aam
Sattais Katcheri

PLAN OF AMBER FORT


1
2
3
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0 metres 100
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KEY

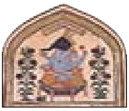
🟨 Area illustrated

🟩 Man Singh's Palace

🟦 Jaleb Chowk

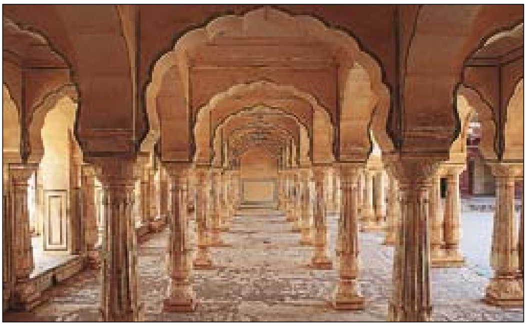
1 Suraj Pol
2 Chand Pol
3 Shila Devi Temple
4 Diwan-i Aam
5 Ganesh Pol
6 Jai Mandir
6 Jas Mandir
6 Sheesh Mahal
7 Sukh Niwas
8 Baradari
9 Zenana

Exploring Amber (the Old Capital)



Detail of painting on Ganesh Pol

Crowning the crest of a hill, Amber Fort offers a panoramic view of Maota Lake and the historic old town at the base of the hill, which was the early seat of the Amber kings before they made the fort their capital. Several havelis, stepwells, and temples can be seen below the fort, pointing to the existence of a self-sufficient township, where the Mughal emperor Akbar used to stop on his annual pilgrimage to Ajmer *(see p376)*.



Sattais Katcheri, where the revenue records were written

The Fort Complex

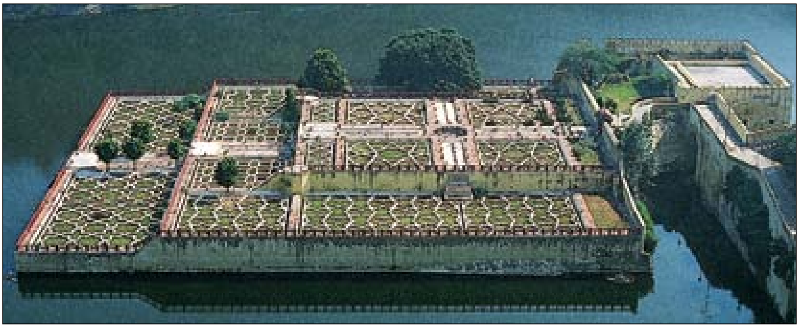
The main entrance to the historic Amber Fort is through the imposing **Suraj Pol** ("Sun Gate"), so called because it faces the direction of the rising sun, the Kachhawaha family emblem. The gate leads into a huge courtyard, **Jaleb Chowk**, lined on three sides with souvenir and refreshment shops. A flight of steps leads to the **Shila Devi Temple**, which has silver doors, silver oil lamps, grand pillars carved to look like banana trees, and contains the Kachhawaha family deity, a stone *(shila)* image of the goddess Kali. The next courtyard is the **Diwan-i-Aam**, the space for public audience. Near it is the **Sattais Katcheri**, a colonnade of 27 *(sattais)* pillars, where scribes once sat to record revenue petitions.

The magnificent **Ganesh Pol** is the gateway to three pleasure palaces, each with special features, built around a Mughal-style garden, **Aram Bagh**. Maota Lake, which provided water to the fort, is surrounded by two exquisite gardens. The **Kesar Kyari Bagh** has star-shaped flower beds once planted with saffron *(kesar)* flowers, while **Dilaram Bagh**, built in 1568 as a resting place for Akbar on his way to Ajmer, is a clever pun on the name of its architect, Dilaram ("Heart's Ease"). A small Archaeological Museum is located nearby. The farthest and oldest end of the fort was converted into the zenana (women's quarters), with screens and covered balconies for the seclusion of the royal ladies in purdah. Faint traces of frescoes are still visible on the walls. In the centre of the courtyard is a pavilion with 12 pillars, the **Baradari**.

The Township

The **Chand Pol** ("Moon Gate"), directly opposite Suraj Pol, leads to the old town outside the fort. The beautiful **Jagat Shiromani Temple** with its remarkable *torana* (gateway) is one of the many temples that lies along this route. It also has a water tank, **Panna Mian ka Kund**. To the east lies **Sagar**, a popular picnic spot with two terraced lakes. The Jaipur-Delhi Highway cuts across the town, and Amber's main market and bus stand are located on this road. Further north stands the **Akbari Mosque**, built by Emperor Akbar in 1569, and towards the east is **Bharmal ki Chhatri**, a walled enclosure containing a group of memorials. This was the old cremation site for the rulers of Amber until a new spot was chosen at Gaitor *(see p363)*, near Jaipur.

Marble carving of a Hindu deity



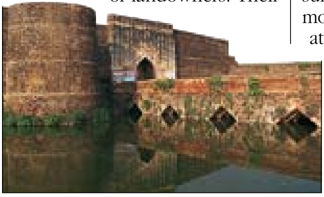
Kesar Kyari Bagh, named after the rare saffron flowers once planted in its star-shaped flower beds

Bharatpur ❸

Bharatpur district. 181 km (112 miles) E of Jaipur. 👥 *204,500.* 🚌 ℹ *RTDC Hotel Saras, (05644) 22 2542.* 🎪 *Jaswant Mela (Oct).*

Most famous for its bird sanctuary, the kingdom of Bharatpur was founded by the fearless Jats, a community of landowners. Their most remarkable leader, Raja Suraj Mal (r.1724–63), fortified the city of Bharatpur in 1733 and used the loot from Mughal buildings to embellish the forts and palaces of his kingdom.

In the centre of the town is **Lohagarh** ("Iron Fort"), a masterpiece of construction. Its massive double ramparts of packed mud and rubble surrounded by impressive moats withstood repeated attacks by the Marathas and the British until it was finally captured by Lord Lake in 1805. Three palaces built in the fort display a fine mix of Mughal and Rajput stylistic detail. One is now the site of a pharmaceutical college, while the other two, around the Katcheri Bagh, house the **State Museum**. Its artifacts include a rare collection of 1st- and 2nd-century stone carvings. An interesting sunken *hamam* (bath) is close by. In 1818, Bharatpur became the region's first princely state to sign a treaty with the East India Company.



The moat and ramparts of Lohagarh

🏛 **State Museum**
Tel *(05644) 22 8185.* ○ *Fri–Wed.* ● *public hols.* 🎟 *free on Mon.* 📷 *extra charges.*

Keoladeo Ghana National Park ❹

See pp368–9.

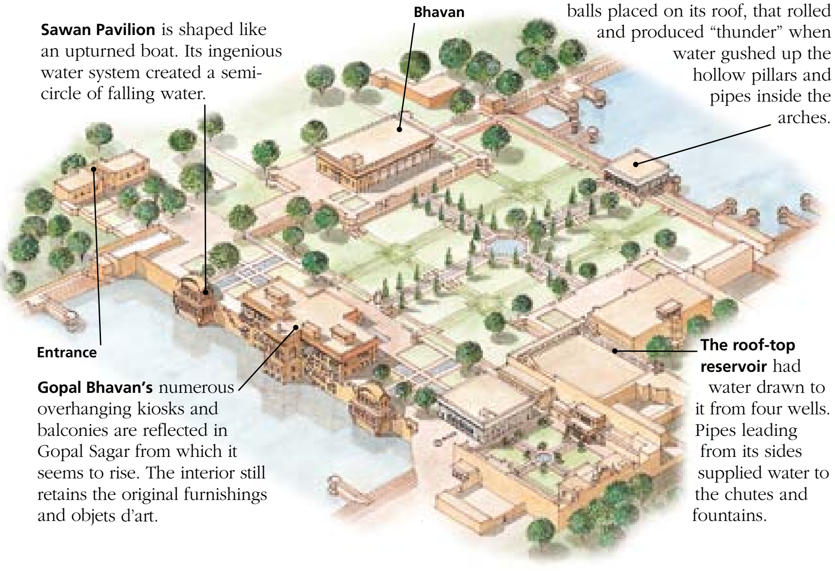
Deeg ❺

Bharatpur district. 36 km (22 miles) N of Bharatpur. 🚌 ℹ *RTDC Hotel Saras, Bharatpur, (05644) 22 3700.* 🎪 *Holi (Mar), Jawahar Mela (Aug).* **Water Palace** ○ *daily.* ● *the day after Holi (Mar).* 🎟

Once the capital of the Jat kings of Bharatpur, Deeg rose to prominence after the decline of the Mughal empire in the 18th century. Its square fort and fortified town, once filled with grand mansions and gardens, now lie unkempt and forlorn. Deeg's Raja Suraj Mal and his son, Jawahar Singh, were keen builders of lavish pleasure palaces and the most remarkable of these is the **Deeg Water Palace**, a romantic summer retreat for the Jat kings. The magic of the monsoon inspired a lyrical composition of sandstone and marble pavilions replete with gardens and pools. A skilful cooling system drew water from a huge reservoir and used a number of innovative special effects to simulate monsoon showers and even produce rainbows. The coloured fountains are now used only during the Jawahar Mela.

Sawan Pavilion, Deeg Water Palace

DEEG WATER PALACE



Sawan Pavilion is shaped like an upturned boat. Its ingenious water system created a semicircle of falling water.

Nand Bhavan

Keshav Bhavan had heavy lithic balls placed on its roof, that rolled and produced "thunder" when water gushed up the hollow pillars and pipes inside the arches.

Entrance

Gopal Bhavan's numerous overhanging kiosks and balconies are reflected in Gopal Sagar from which it seems to rise. The interior still retains the original furnishings and objets d'art.

The roof-top reservoir had water drawn to it from four wells. Pipes leading from its sides supplied water to the chutes and fountains.

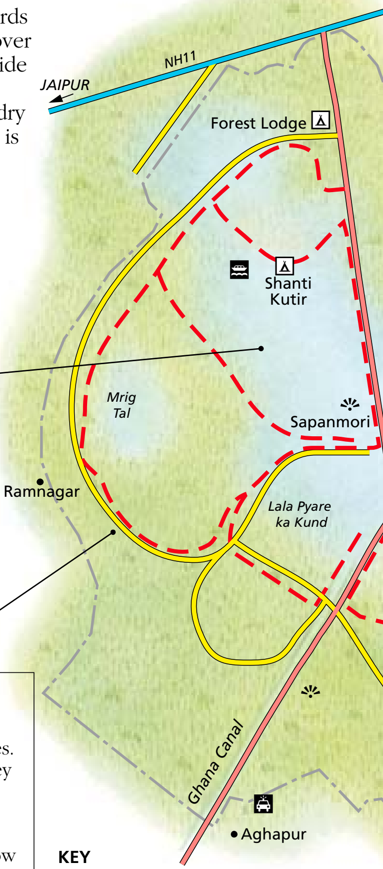
Keoladeo Ghana National Park ❹

A UNESCO World Heritage Site regarded as one of the world's most important bird sanctuaries, Keoladeo Ghana derives its name from a Shiva temple (Keoladeo) within a dense forest *(ghana)*. This once-arid scrubland was first developed by Bharatpur's rulers in the mid-18th century by diverting the waters of a nearby irrigation canal to create a private duck reserve. Extravagant shooting parties for British viceroys and other royal guests were held here, and horrifying numbers of birds were shot in a single day. Today, the park spreads over 29 sq km (11 sq miles) of wetlands, and attracts a wide variety of migrant and water birds who fly in each winter from places as distant as Siberia. Keoladeo's dry area has mixed deciduous and scrub vegetation and is home to many animals, including the famed nilgai.

Shallow wetlands, one of the world's finest heronries

Getting Around the Park
Expert boatmen navigate the wetlands and point out bird colonies. Bicycles and cycle-rickshaws are also available for touring the forest paths.

Dry scrubland provides good grazing for nilgai and other species of deer.



KEY

- 🟥 Main road
- 🟨 Main road
- ▬ Park boundary
- ▪ ▪ Foot path/cycle trail
- 🟩 Marshland
- ✺ Viewpoint
- ▣ Jetty
- ▣ Boating
- ▣ Police station
- ▣ Temple
- ▣ Accommodation

BIRDS, RESIDENT AND MIGRANT

The male Sarus crane dances to attract his mate

The park attracts over 375 bird species belonging to 56 families. Egrets, darters, cormorants, grey herons and storks hatch nearly 30,000 chicks every year. The park's most eagerly awaited visitor is the Siberian crane, now an endangered species. Other birds include the peregrine falcon, steppe eagle, garganery teal, snake bird and white ibis. Among the large variety of storks are the open-bill stork, the painted stork and the black-necked stork, considered to be the world's tallest stork. Standing on coral-coloured legs, the bird is 2 m (7 ft) tall, with a wingspan of 2.5 m (8 ft). The Sarus crane, a symbol of fidelity in Indian mythology, woos its partner for life with an elaborate mating dance.

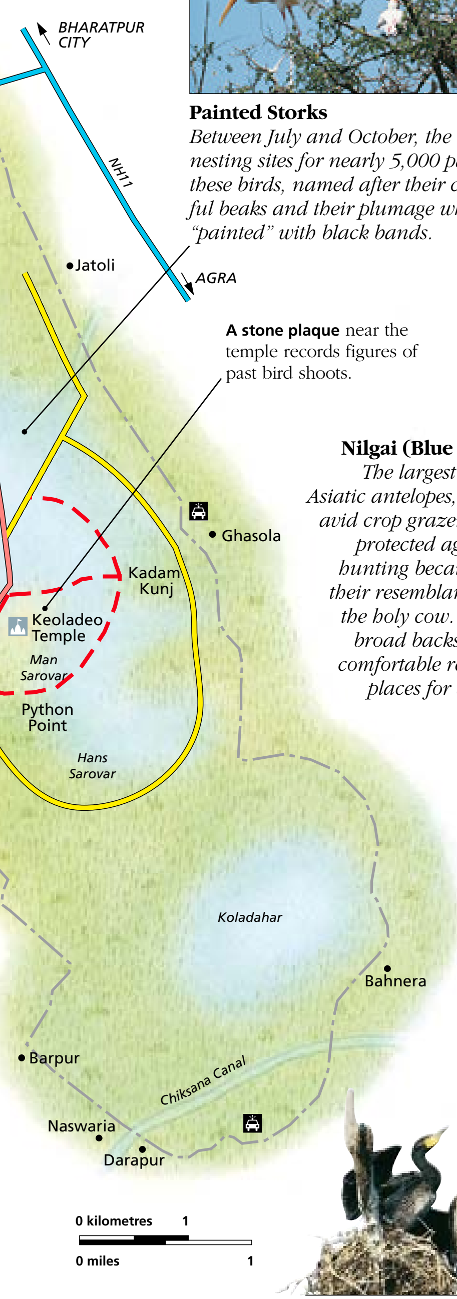
Baby cormorants

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Bharatpur district. 185 km (115 miles) E of Jaipur. 🚉 *Bharatpur, 5 km (3 miles) N of entry point, then taxi.* 🚌 *Bharatpur.* ℹ *RTDC Hotel Saras, Bharatpur, (05644) 22 3700. Deputy Chief Wildlife Warden, (05644) 22 2777.* *extra charges.* *Bicycles & cycle-rickshaws available.*

Painted Storks
Between July and October, the trees become nesting sites for nearly 5,000 pairs of these birds, named after their colourful beaks and their plumage which is "painted" with black bands.

Indian Soft-Shell Turtle
The park's wetlands provide an ideal habitat for this endangered species.


BHARATPUR CITY
NH11
Jatoli
AGRA
Ghasola
Kadam Kunj
Keoladeo Temple
Man Sarovar
Python Point
Hans Sarovar
Koladahar
Bahnera
Barpur
Chiksana Canal
Naswaria
Darapur
0 kilometres 1
0 miles 1

A stone plaque near the temple records figures of past bird shoots.

Nilgai (Blue Bull)
The largest of all Asiatic antelopes, these avid crop grazers are protected against hunting because of their resemblance to the holy cow. Their broad backs offer comfortable resting places for birds.

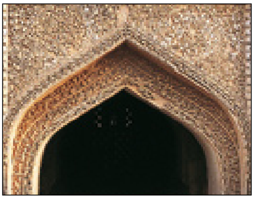
White-Throated Kingfisher
One of the most commonly sighted birds in the park, the vividly-coloured kingfisher is usually found near the ponds, lakes and marshlands, perched on branches of trees, waiting for its prey.

Nesting
With the arrival of the monsoon, thousands of birds, such as these greater cormorants, set up nesting colonies. As many as 60 noisy nests on one tree may be seen during this season.

Alwar ❻

Alwar district. 150 km (93 miles) NE of Jaipur. 👥 *260,300.* 🚉 🚌 ℹ *RTDC, Nehru Marg, opp railway station, (0144) 234 7348.* 🎪 *Jagannathji Fair (Mar/Apr).*

The former princely state of Alwar is now a dusty, provincial town, visited by few tourists except those on their way to the Sariska National Park. Nevertheless it has some remarkable monuments, built by its wealthy rulers in the 18th century, that are worth seeing. The most significant of these is the **City Palace**, whose architectural features include a profusion of curved *bangaldar* roofs and *chhatris* (pavilions) as well as delicate Mughal floral tracery and *jalis*. The palace, built in 1793, now houses the District Collectorate and Police Headquarters, and is best viewed from the central courtyard with its lovely marble pavilions. The lavishly decorated Durbar Hall and the Sheesh Mahal, on the first floor, can only be viewed with special permission.

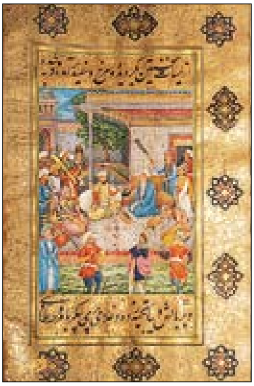


Gate of the Tomb of Fateh Jang

A door to the right of the courtyard leads to the **City Palace Museum**, spread over three halls on the palace's upper storey. Its treasures, which bear witness to the opulent lifestyles of Alwar's maharajas, include rare and exquisite copies of the Persian poet Sa'adi's *Gulistan* (written in 1258) and the *Babur Nama* or "Memoirs of Babur" (1530), superb Mughal and Rajput miniatures and an awesome armoury. Particularly intriguing is a macabre coil called *nagphas*, used for strangling enemies. Another unique exhibit is a silver dining table with dividers, through which shoals of metal fish can be seen swimming.

The cenotaph of Maharaja Bakhtawar Singh (r.1790–1815) lies behind the palace, across a magnificent *kund* (tank). It is locally known as **Moosi Maharani ki Chhatri**, after his mistress who committed *sati* here after he died. An elegant monument that blends brown sandstone with white marble, its ceilings are adorned with gold leaf paintings.

On a steep hill above the city is the rugged **Bala Qila**, a fort with extensive ramparts, massive gateways and some spectacular views from the top. Originally a 10th-century mud fort, it was added to by the Mughals and Jats, and captured by Pratap Singh of Alwar in 1775. Within the fort is a pretty frescoed palace, the Nikumbh Mahal, in the courtyard of which a police wireless station is, rather inappropriately, sited. Also visible are the ruins of the Salim Mahal, named after Jahangir (Salim), Mughal emperor Akbar's heir who was exiled here after he plotted to kill Abu'l Fazl, the emperor's official historian. Near Alwar's railway station is another fine monument, the **Tomb of Fateh Jang**, one of Emperor Shah Jahan's ministers, built in 1647. Dominated by an enormous dome, the walls and ceiling of this magnificent five-storeyed structure have raised plaster reliefs.



A page from the *Gulistan*

Alwar's green lung, **Company Bagh**, is a lovely garden with a greenhouse.

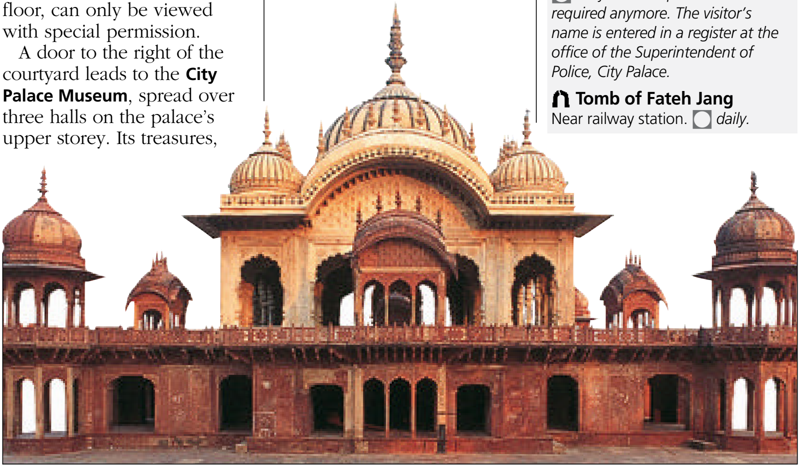
City Palace
Near Collectorate. ○ *daily.* 🎫

City Palace Museum
○ *Sat–Thu.* ● *public hols.* 🎫 🚫📷

Moosi Maharani ki Chhatri
○ *Sat–Thu.* ● *public hols.* 🎫

Bala Qila
○ *daily. Written permission not required anymore. The visitor's name is entered in a register at the office of the Superintendent of Police, City Palace.*

Tomb of Fateh Jang
Near railway station. ○ *daily.*



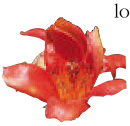
The elegant marble pavilion at Moosi Maharani ki Chhatri

Sariska Palace, a luxury hotel just outside the Tiger Reserve

Sariska National Park ⑦

Alwar district. 37 km (23 miles) NE of Alwar. 🚌 i *Field Director, Project Tiger Sanctuary, Sariska (0144) 284 1333.* ○ *Sep–Jun.* 📷 *extra for personal vehicles or jeeps.* 🍴

Designated a Tiger Reserve under Project Tiger *(see p289)* in 1979, Sariska National Park, formerly the private hunting ground of the princely state of Alwar, sprawls over 800 sq km (309 sq miles), with a core area of 480 sq km (185 sq miles). The Aravalli Range branches out at Sariska, forming low plateaux and valleys that harbour a wide spectrum of wildlife.


Silk cotton in bloom

The tiger population at Sariska is now believed to be between 20 and 30. However, spotting one is a rarity. It was reported by the media that not a single tiger survived in the reserve. Nevertheless, forest guides keep track of where a tiger was last seen and can sometimes lead visitors to spot this elusive predator.

There are a series of watering holes in Sariska, at Pandupol, Bandipol, Slopka, Kalighati and Talvriksha, that make good vantage points to view wildlife, especially at sunset when hoards of animals flock to them to quench their thirst. The gentle chital or spotted deer is commonly sighted at the park's watering holes, while the *chausingha* (four-horned antelope), unique to Sariska, can be spotted around Pandupol. Other species that can be seen here are panthers and black-faced langur monkeys, jackals and hyenas, nilgai or blue bulls, wild boars and porcupines.

Among the birds that can be spotted are the crested serpent eagle, the great Indian horned owl, woodpeckers, kingfishers and partridges.

The dry deciduous forests of Sariska come to life during the brief spring and early summer when the flowering *dhak (Butea monosperma)* and laburnum bloom. The date palm begins to bear fruit, while berries known locally as *kair (Capparis decidua)* appear on the bushes.

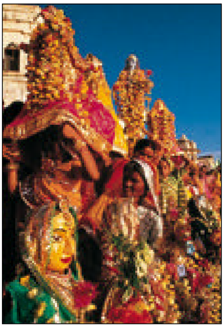
The **Kankwari Fort**, dating to the 17th-century, and temple ruins, such as those of the **Pandupol Temple**, lie within the park. The **Sariska Palace**, built at the end of the 19th century as a hunting lodge for Alwar's rulers, is now a luxury hotel *(see p705)*, with a collection of vintage *shikar* photographs.

Black-faced Hanuman langurs, a common sight at Sariska

FESTIVALS OF RAJASTHAN

Nagaur Cattle Fair *(Jan/Feb)*, Nagaur. Camel races, puppet shows, folk music and dance mark this week-long fair *(see p376)*.

Gangaur *(Mar/Apr)*. This 18-day festival celebrates the marital bliss of Shiva and Parvati and is a major event all over Rajasthan, though celebrated with special verve in Udaipur. Women perform the swirling *ghoomar* dance, and carry images of the goddess in colourful processions through the streets, as they pray for their husbands' wellbeing.


Gangaur celebrations, Udaipur

Elephant Festival *(Mar)*, Jaipur. Processions of splendidly caparisoned elephants and an elephant polo tournament are the highlights of this festival.

Mewar Festival *(Mar)*, Udaipur. Mewar's heritage is celebrated with cultural shows and fireworks.

Teej *(Aug/Sep)*. Girls all over Rajasthan wear new clothes, sing and dance joyously to celebrate this festival venerating Parvati, goddess of marital harmony. Teej also heralds the arrival of the monsoon.

Urs *(Oct)*, Ajmer. The mesmerising music of qawwali singers is a highlight of the 13-day-long death anniversary ceremonies for the Sufi saint, Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti.

Pushkar Fair (Oct/Nov), Pushkar *(see pp374–5)*.

Shekhawati ❽

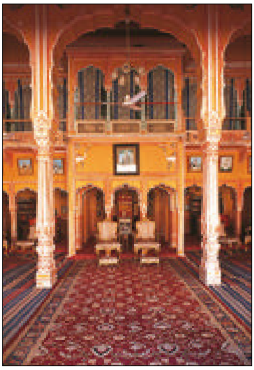
Sikar & Jhunjhunu districts. 115 km (72 miles) NW from Jaipur to Sikar. *Gangaur Festival (Mar/Apr), Dussehra (Sept/Oct).*

This region, named after its 15th-century ruler Rao Shekha, has a number of fascinating small towns with well-preserved painted *havelis*, forts and temples. Among the most interesting are **Lachhmangarh** and **Fatehpur** with their grand *havelis*, and **Dundlod**, with its well-restored fort. Especially worth visiting is **Ramgarh**, 20 km (12 miles) north of Fatehpur. Famous for its Shani Temple which has an ornate interior of mirrorwork and gilt, the town also has the Ram Gopal Poddar Chhatri, covered with more than 400 paintings. The main bazaar is crowded with "antique" dealers, who sell carved doors and windows from derelict *havelis*. Many of these are extremely skilful new copies of the originals.

Mahansar, 15 km (9 miles) northeast of Ramgarh, has the splendid Sone ki Dukan Haveli, abundantly worked in gold leaf. The paintings on its vaulted ceiling, depicting the incarnations of Vishnu, are perhaps the finest in the area.

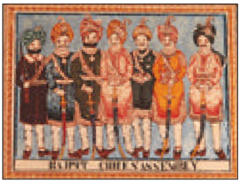
A view of the impressive Char-Chowk Haveli, Lachhmangarh

Bissau, 10 km (6 miles) northwest of Mahansar, has the 18th-century Keshargarh Fort, which provides an excellent view of the sand dunes to the north and west. It also has ten richly painted *havelis*. During Dussehra, Ramlila performances take place every evening, with the actors wearing masks and costumes made by local *sadhvis* (female ascetics) who started this tradition in the 19th century.


Inside Dundlod Fort

Churu, 12 km (8 miles) northwest of Bissau, is in the desert. Though not actually part of the Shekhawati region, it is included in the painted *haveli* circuit, as many merchants had homes here too. The Surana Double Haveli, with its imposing proportions and 1,111 windows, is the main attraction. The Banthia Haveli, east of the vegetable market, has interesting if bizarre frescoes, including one of Jesus smoking a cigar.

THE PAINTED HAVELIS OF SHEKHAWATI


Fresco of a group of turbaned Rajput chieftains

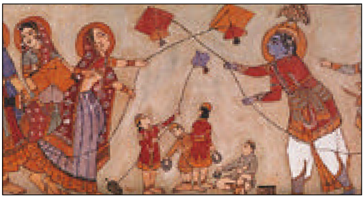
The ancestral homes of some of India's leading industrialist families, such as the Birlas and Goenkas, can be seen in the many little towns of Shekhawati. These sprawling old *havelis* with their exuberantly frescoed walls were built between the late 18th and early 20th centuries by local Marwari merchants who had migrated to the port-cities of Bombay (Mumbai) and Calcutta (Kolkata) to seek their fortunes. Their interaction with the British and exposure to modern urban and industrial trends influenced their lifestyles. Consequently, their homes grew increasingly grand, reflecting the new ideas they brought back with them, as well as their new-found wealth and social status.

The style and content of the Shekhawati frescoes are a telling comment on the urbanization of a traditional genre. The local artists still followed the one-dimensional realism of traditional Rajput painting *(see p405)*, but juxtaposed among the gods, goddesses and martial heroes are images from a changing world. In their celebration of contemporary "pop" themes, the frescoes of British ladies, top-hatted gentlemen, brass bands and soldiers, trains, motor cars, aeroplanes, gramophones and telephones, symbolize the industrial society emerging in the late 19th century.

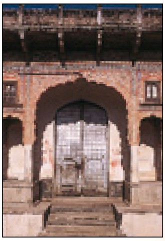
The entrance to Biyani Haveli, Sikar

A Tour of Shekhawati ❾

Situated along the old camel caravan trade route, northwest of Jaipur, the Shekhawati ("Garden of Shekha") region resembles an open-air museum. A network of excellent roads through semi-arid scrubland connects numerous towns and villages, known for minor forts, *baolis* and the painted *havelis* of India's leading merchant families, still standing in all their evocative splendour.



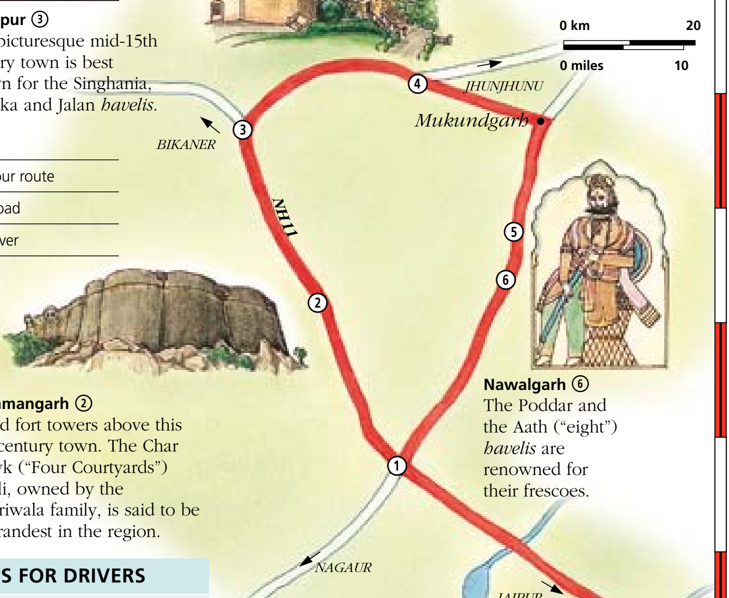
A wall in the Poddar School, Nawalgarh, depicting gods and goddesses flying kites



Mandawa ④
This fort-palace is now a charming hotel and a convenient base from which to visit neighbouring towns.

Dundlod ⑤
Its fort-palace and two splendid Goenka *havelis* are worth a visit.

Fatehpur ③
This picturesque mid-15th century town is best known for the Singhania, Goenka and Jalan *havelis*.



KEY

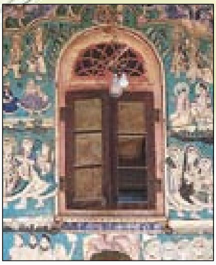
- 🟥 Tour route
- Road
- River

Lachhmangarh ②
An old fort towers above this 19th-century town. The Char Chowk ("Four Courtyards") Haveli, owned by the Ganeriwala family, is said to be the grandest in the region.

Nawalgarh ⑥
The Poddar and the Aath ("eight") *havelis* are renowned for their frescoes.

TIPS FOR DRIVERS

Length: *111 km (69 miles).*
Stopping-off points: *Mandawa, Dundlod, Mukundgarh, Fatehpur and Nawalgarh have good hotels.*
Getting around: *Petrol pumps are at regular intervals on the main road. A number of lesser roads lead off from NH11 towards Jhunjhunu. All of them have roadside eateries which sell mineral water, hot and cold drinks and snacks.*



Sikar ①
Sikar's charm lies in its colourfully painted *havelis*, bazaars and rural ambience.

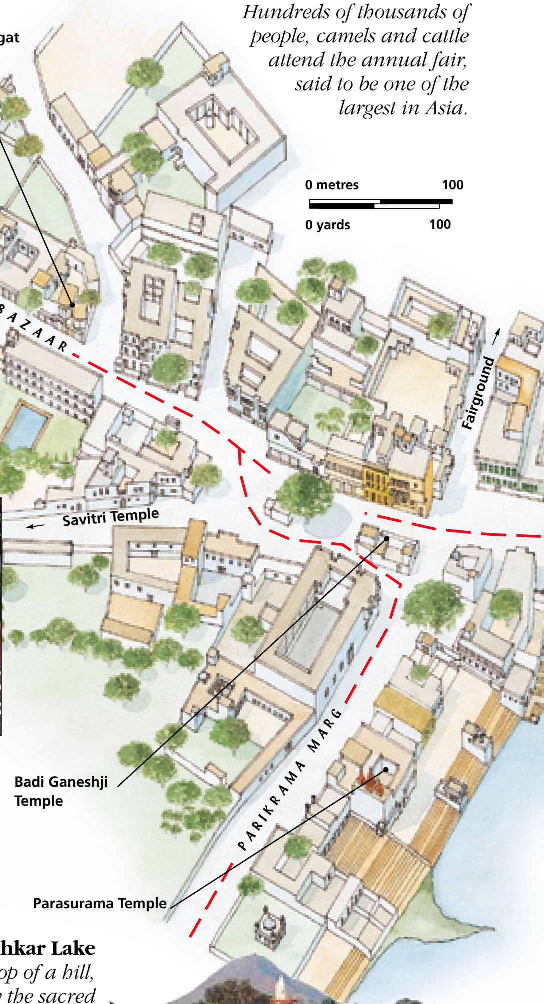
Street-by-Street: Pushkar ⑩

A turtle shrine

A peaceful pilgrim town of lakes and 400 temples, Pushkar derives its name from *pushpa* (flower) and *kar* (hand) after a legend that claims its lakes were created from the petals that fell from the divine hands of Brahma the Creator. Today, life revolves around its lakeside ghats, temples and vibrant, colourful bazaars, and it is this harmonious mix of the spiritual and commercial that draws people to Pushkar.

Villagers at the Fair

Hundreds of thousands of people, camels and cattle attend the annual fair, said to be one of the largest in Asia.


Residential area
Dhanna Bhagat Temple
0 metres 100
0 yards 100
SADAR BAZAAR
Fairground
Savitri Temple
Badi Ganeshji Temple
PARIKRAMA MARG
Parasurama Temple

★ Brahma Temple

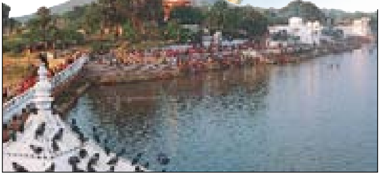
This is one of the few temples in India dedicated to Brahma who, according to myth, was cursed by his wife Savitri when, in her absence, he invited Gayatri, a tribal girl, to take her place in an important ritual.

KEY

– – – Suggested route

Pushkar Lake

On top of a hill, by the sacred lake of Pushkar, is the temple of Savitri. Across the lake, on another hill, is the Gayatri Temple.



STAR SIGHTS

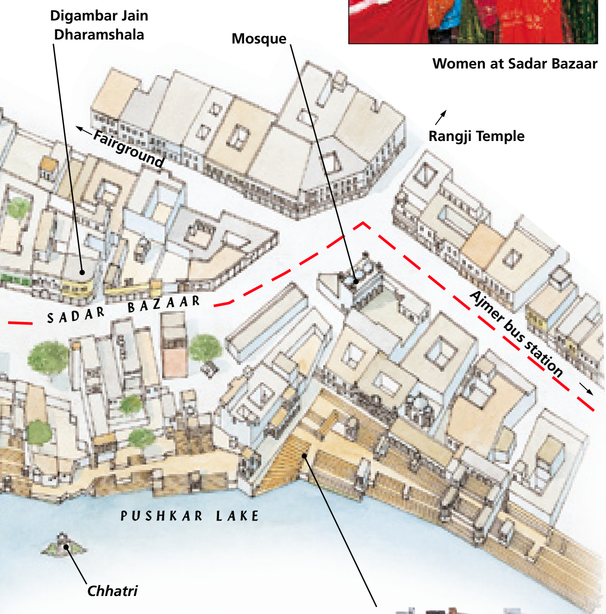
- ★ Brahma Temple
- ★ Ghats

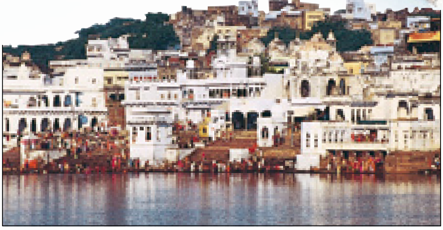
Rangji Temple
This temple is conspicuous for its South Indian style of architecture (see p20). *Its* gopura *(gateway), carved with over 360 images of deities, towers over the area.*

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Ajmer district. 144 km (90 miles) SW of Jaipur. *14,800.* *RTDC Hotel Sarovar, (0145) 277 2040.* *daily.* *Pushkar Fair (Oct/Nov). No eggs, meat or alcohol is available or allowed in Pushkar.*

Women at Sadar Bazaar





★ Ghats
Pushkar has 52 ghats. Devout Hindus make at least one pilgrimage to Pushkar and bathe at the holy ghats to wash away their sins, thereby earning themselves a place in heaven.

Camel at the Pushkar Fair

The Pushkar Fair

In the Hindu month of Kartik (October/November), ten days after Diwali, this peaceful town and its environs come alive as the much anticipated annual cattle fair begins. Tents and campsites suddenly spring up to accommodate the thousands of pilgrims, tourists and villagers with herds of cattle, horses and camels who come here to participate in this spectacular event.

Pushkar has always been the region's central cattle market for local herdsmen and farmers who buy and sell camels and indigenous breeds of cattle. Over the years, this trade in livestock has greatly increased in volume. The Pushkar Fair is now one of Asia's largest cattle fairs, and it transforms the quiet little village into a bustling market.

In the vast, specially-built amphitheatre on the outskirts of the town, numerous camel, horse and donkey races and contests take place amid lusty cheers from the spectators. A festive, carnival atmosphere prevails in Pushkar during the fair's two-week duration. Giant Ferris wheels and open air theatres offer amusement, while food stalls do a brisk trade, as do the shops that sell a fascinating variety of goods. In the evenings, people huddle round campfires, listening to the haunting strains of Rajasthani folk ballads. The fair reaches a crescendo on the night of the full moon (*purnima*), when pilgrims take a dip in the holy lake. At dusk, during the beautiful *deepdan* ceremony, hundreds of clay lamps on leaf boats are lit and set afloat in a magical tableau.

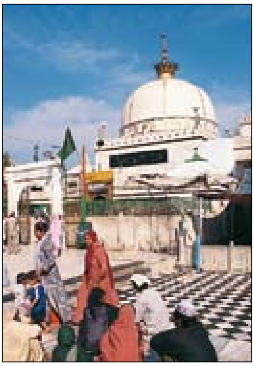
Ajmer ⓫

Ajmer district. 135 km (84 miles) SW of Jaipur. 👥 *485,200.* 🚆 🚌 **i** *Rajasthan Tourism, near Khadim Hotel, (0145) 262 7426.* 🎉 *Urs (Oct).*

Ajmer is famous throughout the subcontinent for the holy Muslim shrine, **Dargah Sharif**, the tomb of the great Sufi saint, Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti (1143–1235). Located in the southwest corner of the city, the saint's marble-domed tomb is at the heart of the Dargah complex, which is virtually a township in itself. It includes a bazaar and two marble mosques, built by the Mughal emperors Akbar and Shah Jahan in the 16th and 17th centuries. Akbar was Chishti's most famous devotee, and once walked barefoot all the way from Agra to Ajmer, a distance of 363 km (226 miles), as thanksgiving after the birth of his son Salim, the future Emperor Jahangir.

Millions of pilgrims come to Ajmer for the saint's annual Urs (death anniversary) in October, when spirited Sufi musicians sing the saint's praises in front of his tomb. A special rice pudding, cooked in giant iron cauldrons in the Dargah's courtyard, is offered to devotees.

West of the Dargah Sharif is Ajmer's architectural gem, the **Adhai-Din-ka-Jhonpra**, or "Hut of Two-and-a-Half Days". This strange name is said to derive from the duration of a religious fair that used to be held here. Though in ruins, the early 13th-century mosque complex, built into a hillside, is most impressive. Its main glory is its exquisite seven-arched screen in front of the colonnaded hall. Each arch is different, and the numerous columns have elaborate carvings.



Pilgrims at Ajmer's Dargah Sharif, India's holiest Muslim shrine

In the southeast corner of Ajmer is **Mayo College**, one of India's best public schools. An excellent example of Indo-Saracenic architecture, it was set up in 1875 by the viceroy, Lord Mayo, as an "Eton of the East" for Rajput princes. Its early students came accompanied by family retainers and private tutors, and some, like the prince of Alwar, even brought along their own elephants. Behind the 19th-century **Nasiyan Temple**, in the heart of the old city, is the Svarna Nagari Hall, vividly decorated with coloured-glass mosaics and large gilded wooden figures, recreating scenes from Jain mythology.

Calligraphy, Adhai-Din-ka-Jhonpra

The **Rajputana Museum**, also in the old city, is located in Emperor Akbar's fort and palace. Its exhibits include impressive sculptures dating from the 4th to the 12th centuries.

Around **Anasagar Lake**, to the northwest of the city, are elegant marble pavilions built by Emperor Shah Jahan in the 17th century. They are set on the lake's banks, in a pretty garden called Daulat Bagh. North of the city, on the summit of Beetli Hill, is the ruined 12th-century **Taragarh Fort**, which affords spectacular views of Ajmer and the surrounding countryside.

Nasiyan Temple
SM Soni Marg. ○ *daily.* ✓

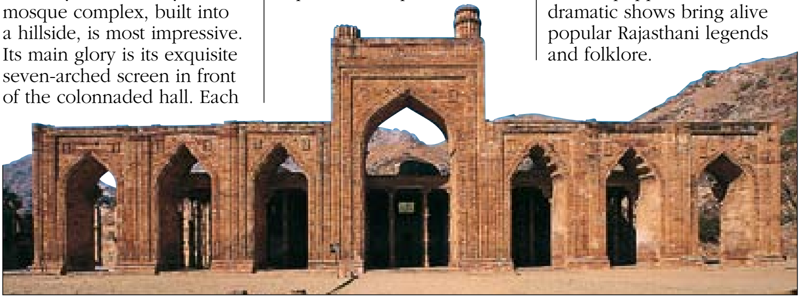
🏛 **Rajputana Museum**
Near bus stand. ○ *daily.* ✓

Nagaur ⓬

Nagaur district. 137 km (85 miles) NE of Jodhpur. 👥 *83,400.* 🚌 🎉 *Cattle Fair (Jan/Feb).*

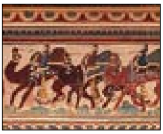
This little desert town, midway between Jodhpur and Bikaner, is dominated by **Ahichhatragarh Fort**, dating to the 12th century. In the mid-18th century, the ruler of Jodhpur received the fort as a gift from the Mughals and embellished it with a charming pleasure palace. Several of its chambers have exquisite frescoes, now being carefully restored. The palace also has lovely water channels decorated with fish-scale patterns and ornamental spouts, as well as an ingenious system of airducts that used to supply the inner rooms with cool air.

The Nagaur Cattle Fair rivals the Pushkar Fair *(see p375)*, and is a dazzling kaleidoscope of animals, crafts and people, including Nagaur's famous puppeteers whose dramatic shows bring alive popular Rajasthani legends and folklore.



The exuberantly decorated seven-arched screen at the Adhai-Din-ka-Jhonpra, Ajmer

Ships of the Thar Desert



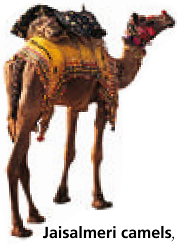
Mural of camels

The desert dwellers of Rajasthan could not survive without their camels. In the sandy, inhospitable expanse of the Thar Desert, it is their only means of transport, their beast of burden, as well as an important source of nourishment (camel's milk, slightly salty in taste, is drunk throughout Rajasthan's deserts). The hardy camel demands little in return. It can do without food and water for up to a month in winter, and a week in summer, tanking up on 70 litres (148 pints) of water at one go. The Rajasthani's affection for his camel is evident at all the desert fairs, where camels are given pride of place, resplendent in their colourful tassels and jewellery.

VARIETIES OF CAMEL

Three varieties of camel inhabit Rajasthan. All of them have two rows of eyelashes which help keep the sand out of their eyes. Their humps contain a thick layer of fat, which shields their bodies from the scorching desert sun.

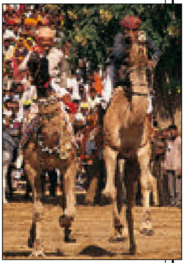
Bikaneri camels *have hairy ears, and great load-bearing capacity and stamina.*



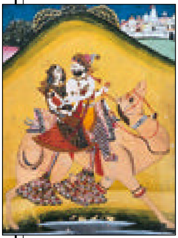
Jaisalmeri camels, *with longer legs, can cover up to 22 km (14 miles) an hour.*

Gujarati camels *are darker-haired and adept at traversing marshy areas such as the Rann of Kutch.*

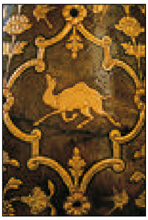
Camel carts, *ingeniously equipped with old aircraft wheels, are a common sight in Rajasthan's cities.*



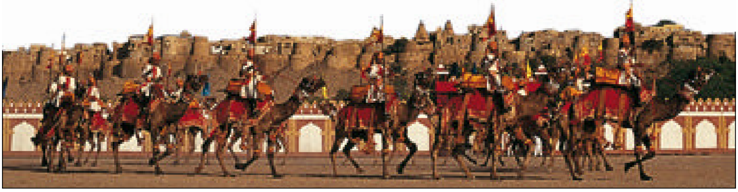
Camel races *at fairs test the evenness of a camel's gait by seeing how far it can carry a pot of milk without spilling any.*



Dhola and Maru, *star-crossed lovers in Rajasthani folklore who eloped on their trusty camel, are a favourite theme in paintings.*



Camelskin handicrafts *include beautiful embossed water bottles. Bags, slippers, and lacquer-painted lampshades are other camelskin products.*



Camel cavalry regiments *of the Indian Army have their origin in the camel regiments of the maharaja of Bikaner, which fought in Egypt in World War I. Today they patrol the desert borders.*

Bikaner ⑬

Bikaner district. 361 km (224 miles) NW of Jaipur. 👥 *529,000.* 🚆 🚌 ℹ *Dhola Maru Hotel, Pooran Singh Circle, (0151) 222 6701.* 🎪 *Camel Festival (Jan), Jambeshwar Festival (Feb/Mar), Kolayat Fair (Nov).*

Along with Jodhpur and Jaisalmer, Bikaner was one of the three great Desert Kingdoms of Rajasthan and, like them, prospered because of its strategic location on the overland caravan trade route to Central Asia and China. It was founded in 1486 by Rao Bika, the disgruntled younger son of Rao Jodha, the ruler of Jodhpur *(see pp380–81)*, who left home in search of new territory to conquer.

Somewhat overshadowed by the splendours of Jodhpur and Jaisalmer, Bikaner nevertheless has a great deal to offer visitors, with its old walled town where camels saunter past colourful stalls, its many temples and palaces, and the magnificent Junagarh Fort, perhaps the best preserved and most ornately decorated of all the forts in Rajasthan.

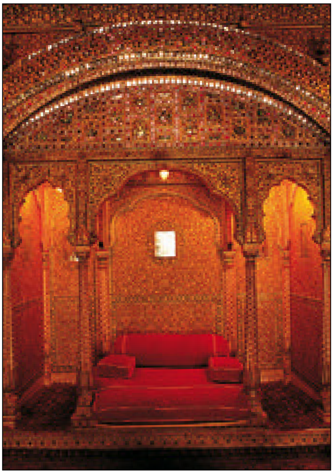
The imposing ramparts of the 16th-century Junagarh Fort

Maharaja's swing at Junagarh Fort

🏛 Junagarh Fort

○ *Sat–Thu.* 🎫 🎧 📷 *extra charges.* **Museum** ○ *daily.* 🎫

Constructed between 1587 and 1593 by the third ruler of Bikaner, Rai Singh, Junagarh Fort is protected by a 986-m (3,235-ft) long sandstone wall with 37 bastions, a moat and, most effectively of all, by the forbidding expanse of the Thar Desert. Not surprisingly, the fort has never been conquered, a fact which explains its excellent state of preservation. Within the fort's austere stone walls are no less than 37 profusely decorated palaces, temples and pavilions, built by its successive rulers over the centuries, though in a harmonious continuity of style. The most outstanding is the **Anup Mahal**, built by Maharaja Anup Singh in 1690 as his Hall of Private Audience. It was sumptuously decorated between 1787 and 1800 by Maharaja Surat Singh. In an ingenious imitation of Mughal *pietra dura* work at a fraction of the cost, the lime-plaster walls of the Anup Mahal have been polished to a high lustre. They are covered with red and gold lacquer patterns, further embellished with mirrors and gold leaf. The **Karan Mahal** (built between 1631 and 1669) is the Hall of Public Audience and is ornamented in a similar if somewhat less lavish style.


The luxurious interior of Anup Mahal with ornamental lacquer work

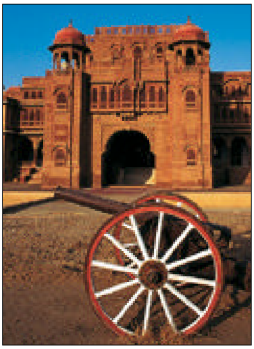
Two other gorgeous, heavily decorated palaces are the 17th-century **Chandra Mahal** ("Moon Palace") and **Phool Mahal** ("Flower Palace"). The latter contains Rao Bika's small, low bed with curved silver legs, on which he slept with his feet touching the ground. The bed was so designed to enable Rao Bika to jump quickly to his feet and fight off murderous intruders. The Chandra Mahal, which was the queens' palace, has carved marble panels depicting the Radha-Krishna legend, and both palaces have superb stone carving and *jalis*. The blue-and-gold **Badal Mahal** ("Cloud Palace") is covered with paintings of clouds, yellow streaks of lightning and rain showers – a favourite fantasy in this arid land. The **Hawa Mahal** ("Palace of Winds") has a huge mirror positioned over the maharaja's bed, which apparently enabled him to view the courtyard below, thus alerting him to approaching danger. The oldest palace in the fort is **Lal Niwas**, dating to 1595, and decorated with floral motifs in red and gold. The newest palace is the huge **Durbar Niwas** ("Coronation Palace"), built in the early 20th century by Bikaner's most progressive ruler Sir Ganga Singh (r.1887–1943), who gave Bikaner its railway link and built the Ganga Canal which brought precious irrigation water to his kingdom. He was also famous for hosting elaborate *shikars* (hunting expeditions) for visiting British dignitaries. The Durbar Niwas now houses the fort museum, whose armoury section includes such fascinating exhibits as a 56-kg (124-lb) suit of armour, a dagger with a pistol built into it, and swords with lion-shaped handles. Other exhibits include the fragrant sandalwood throne of the rulers, said to date back to their 5th-century ancestors who were the kings of Kannauj (Uttar Pradesh), and a curious half-spoon for soup, used by the maharaja to ensure that his luxuriant moustache remained pristine during mealtimes.

Coat of arms of Bikaner's rulers

Walled City

West end of MG Rd. **Shops** ○ *daily.*

In the old walled city, entered through Kote Gate, is the bazaar, where excellent local handicrafts can be found, such as rugs and carpets, painted lampshades made of camel hide, and beautiful miniatures in the Bikaneri style. Savoury snacks *(bhujias)* are another local speciality, and Bikaneri *bhujias* are renowned throughout India, as are the sweets made of camel's milk. The grand 17th- and 18th-century *havelis* of Bikaner's wealthy merchants line the narrow lanes in the vicinity around Rampuria Street. Two of the most ornate are the **Rampuria** and **Kothari Havelis**. The former is now a delightful heritage hotel. In the southwestern corner of the walled town are two Jain temples, dating from the early 16th century, the **Bhandeshwar** and **Sandeshwar Temples**. Both are ornately carved and are embellished with frescoes, mirror-work and gold leaf scrollwork inside. They were built by two brothers who, having no children, constructed these masterpieces for posterity.


One of the two cannons flanking the entrance to Lalgarh Palace

Lalgarh Palace

N of city centre. ***Tel*** *(0151) 254 0201.*
Museum ○ *Thu–Tue.*

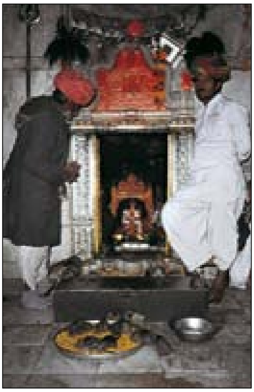
Lalgarh Palace, outside the walled town, is a sprawling extravaganza of carved friezes, *jalis*, pillars and arches in the distinctive reddish-pink local sandstone (which resulted in Bikaner being dubbed the "Red City"). Constructed between 1902 and 1926, it was designed by Sir Samuel Swinton Jacob *(see p353)* in a style that combines traditional Rajput and Renaissance European features with Art Nouveau decor inside. Part of it has been converted into a hotel *(see p702)*, and another section into a museum with vintage photographs and wildlife trophies. Lalgarh Palace's museum and beautiful gardens are open to visitors.

Environs

The **Camel Breeding Farm**, 9 km (6 miles) southeast of Bikaner, is best visited in the late afternoon when the camels return from grazing. Set up in 1975, the farm breeds nearly half the camels found in India, including those for the camel regiment of the Indian Army. **Gajner**, 30 km (19 miles) northwest of Bikaner, has the red sandstone Summer Palace of the maharajas, now a luxury hotel *(see p702)*, and the Gajner National Park, home to blackbucks, wild boars, desert foxes and a large number of migratory birds. The 17th-century **Karni Mata Temple** at Deshnok, 30 km (19 miles) southeast of Bikaner, is also known as the Rat Temple, because of the hundreds of rats that swarm around the temple and its precincts. The rats are considered sacred and are fed sweets and milk by the priests and visitors, who believe that they are reincarnated holy men. The temple is dedicated to Karni Mata, an incarnation of Durga, and is entered through intricately carved silver doors, presented by Sir Ganga Singh.

Camel Breeding Farm
○ *Mon–Sat.*

Karni Mata Temple
○ *daily.* *Karni Mata Festival (Mar/Apr & Sep/Oct).*


Devotee feeding milk to rats at Karni Mata Temple, Deshnok

Phalodi ⑭

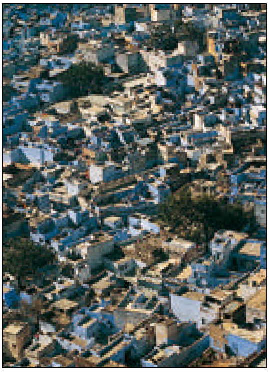
Jodhpur district. 150 km (93 miles) SW of Bikaner.

This large town attracts visitors because of the lovely hamlet of Khichan, 4 km (2.5 miles) to its east. Khichan is famous for the demoiselle cranes that gather around its lake between September and March. The birds migrate here from the Mongolian steppes for the winter. Every day, the villagers spread grain on the fields for the birds, and as a result the number of cranes that come here has increased substantially over the years. At last count, 7,000 cranes spent the winter at Khichan.

Jodhpur ⓯

Clock, Umaid Bhavan Palace

With the majestic Mehrangarh Fort towering over opulent palaces, colourful bazaars and the sands of the Thar Desert, Jodhpur epitomizes all the romance and feudal splendour of Rajasthan. Now the second largest city in the state, Jodhpur was founded in 1459 by Rao Jodha, the Rathore ruler of the kingdom of Marwar. Strategically located on the overland trade route, it soon became a flourishing trade centre. Its merchant class, known as the Marwaris *(see pp372)*, have retained their entrepreneurial skills and continue to run many of India's leading business houses. The special riding breeches, known the world over as jodhpurs, were designed here.



Blue-washed houses around Jodhpur's Mehrangarh Fort

Mehrangarh Fort

See pp382–3.

Sardar Bazaar

○ *daily.*

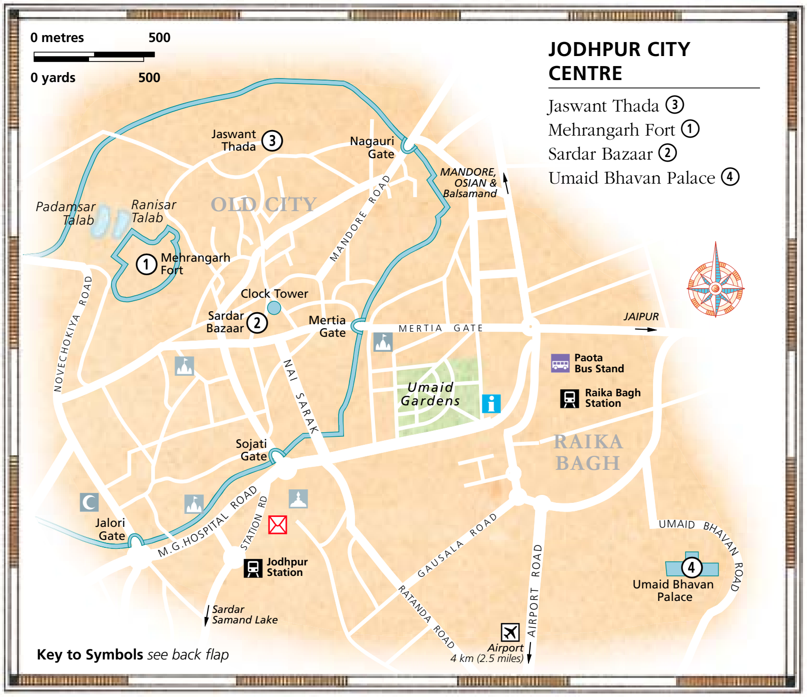
Jodhpur's bazaar lies in the heart of the old city, which is surrounded by a 10-km (6-mile) wall, pierced by eight gates. Clustered around a clock tower (built in 1912), the bazaar is a fascinating area to explore, with its little shops selling silver jewellery, lacquer bangles, tie-dyed fabrics, soft camel leather shoes, puppets, clay figurines and colourful heaps of sweets and spices. The pavements are lined with henna artists who decorate women's palms with intricate, lacy patterns.

An interesting building in this area is the early 17th-century **Taleti Mahal**, its carved balconies supported by temple pillars. Built for a favourite royal concubine, it now houses a school. There are several other beautiful houses in the bazaar area, mostly made of red sandstone and heavily carved.

Jaswant Thada

○ *daily.*

This elegant pillared marble memorial with fine lattice carving is the *chhatri* (cenotaph) of Maharaja Jaswant Singh II (r.1878–95), whose innovative irrigation schemes brought water and prosperity to this parched land. Local people, who



0 metres 500
0 yards 500
JODHPUR CITY CENTRE
Jaswant Thada ③
Mehrangarh Fort ①
Sardar Bazaar ②
Umaid Bhavan Palace ④
Jaswant Thada ③
Nagauri Gate
MANDORE, OSIAN & Balsamand
Padamsar Talab
Ranisar Talab
OLD CITY
MANDORE ROAD
① Mehrangarh Fort
NOVECHOKIYA ROAD
Clock Tower
Sardar Bazaar ②
Mertia Gate
MERTIA GATE
JAIPUR
Paota Bus Stand
Raika Bagh Station
NAI SARAK
Umaid Gardens
RAIKA BAGH
Sojati Gate
Jalori Gate
M.G.HOSPITAL ROAD
STATION RD
Jodhpur Station
GAUSALA ROAD
RATANDA ROAD
AIRPORT ROAD
UMAID BHAVAN ROAD
④ Umaid Bhavan Palace
Sardar Samand Lake
Airport 4 km (2.5 miles)
Key to Symbols see back flap

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp702–5 and pp731–2

Umaid Bhavan Palace, a fusion of Rajput, Jain and Art Deco styles

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Jodhpur district. 331 km (206 miles) W of Jaipur. 👥 *846,500.* ✈ *5 km (3 miles) S of city centre.* 🚉 🚌 ℹ *High Court Rd, (0291) 254 5083.* ⊖ *Mon–Sat.* 🎭 *Jodhpur–Rajasthan International Folk Festival (Oct), Marwar Festival (Oct).*

believe the maharaja has retained his healing touch, come regularly to offer prayer and flowers at his shrine. Cenotaphs of subsequent rulers and members of the royal families are also located here, though earlier rulers have their memorials at Mandore.

🏛 Umaid Bhavan Palace

○ *daily.* 🎫

This immense palace, built of creamy-pink sandstone and marble, is a prime example of princely India's opulence. Its 347 rooms include eight dining halls, two theatres, a ballroom, several lavishly decorated reception halls and a vast underground swimming pool. A 60-m (197-ft) dome covers the cavernous central hall which, at its inauguration, seated 1,000 people for dinner.

The palace was commissioned by Maharaja Umaid Singh, apparently to create jobs for his famine-stricken subjects. Begun in 1929, it took 3,000 men 15 years to complete; 19 km (12 miles) of railway tracks were also laid to bring the sandstone from the quarry. HV Lanchester, the architect of the Central Hall of Westminster in London, created a pleasing fusion of Rajput, Jain and European Art Deco styles for his royal patron.

Umaid Singh's grandson, Gaj Singh, still lives in a section of the palace, while the rest has been turned into a luxury hotel. The palace museum is open to visitors and has an impressive collection of decorated weapons, watches and fantastically-shaped clocks, paintings, French furniture and porcelain.

The road in front of it, leading to the smaller Ajit Bhavan Palace, is lined with antique shops.

Environs

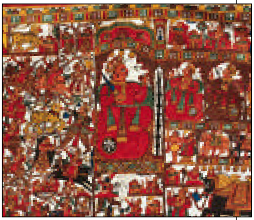
Mandore, 9 km (6 miles) north of Jodhpur, was the capital of the Rathore kings of Marwar until the 15th century, when Rao Jodha built a new capital at Jodhpur. Set around terraced garden on a hillside are the red sandstone *chhatris* of Jodhpur's earlier rulers. The most imposing is that of Ajit Singh with its towering temple-like spire. When he died in 1724, his six wives and 58 concubines committed *sati* on his funeral pyre. The Hall of Heroes has 15 life-size statues of religious deities and folk heroes. Further up the hill are the queens' cenotaphs (Raniyon ki Chhatri) and the tall and narrow 17th-century Ek Thamba Mahal Palace.

Balsamand, 6 km (4 miles) north of Jodhpur, has the 19th-century red sandstone water palace of the maharajas beside a large artificial lake. The **Sardar Samand Lake**, 55 km (34 miles) south of Jodhpur, attracts several water birds including egrets, ibis and pelicans. On its shores is the maharajas' Art Deco-style hunting lodge. The drive here passes through interesting Bishnoi villages *(see p385).*

Jaswant Thada, the 19th-century cenotaph of Maharaja Jaswant Singh II

BHOPA BALLADEERS

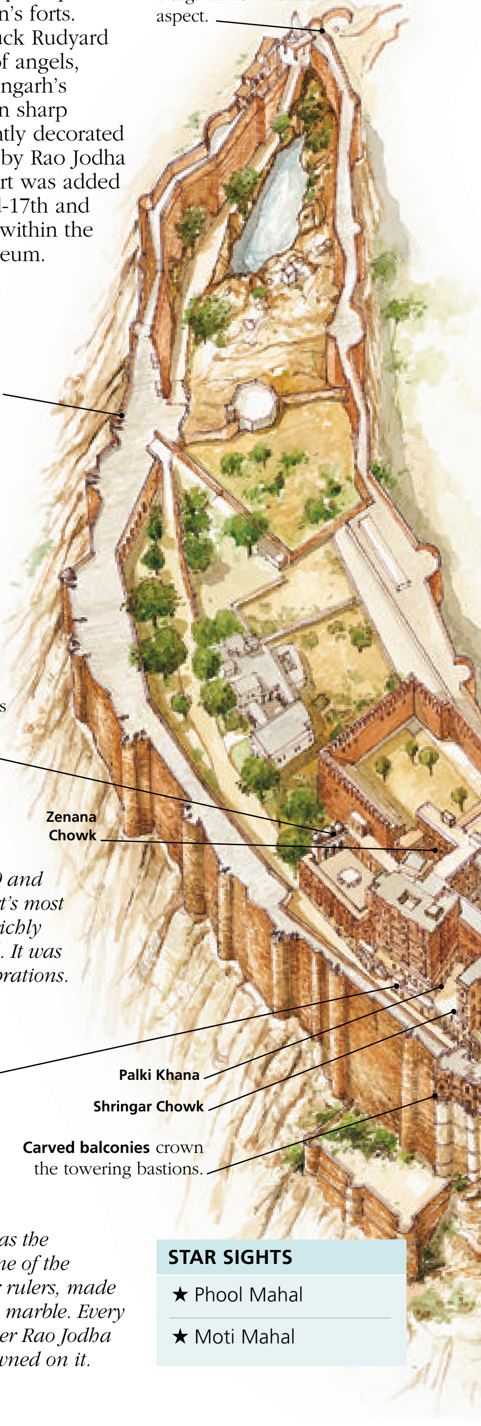
Like the troubadours of medieval Europe, the nomadic Bhopa tribe of western Rajasthan enjoys a lively tradition of storytelling through song and dance. A long painted scroll (known as a *phad*) is, rather like a comic strip, crammed with paintings depicting dramatic events in the life of a Marwar hero, the brave warrior Pabuji. The Bhopa unrolls his scroll, and narrates the story through songs, highlighting relevant pictures on the scroll with a lantern, while his wife brings the tale to life with animated dance sequences. The Bhopas' performances draw enthusiastic crowds at fairs and festivals across the Marwar region.


Painted scroll used by Bhopas

Jodhpur: Mehrangarh Fort

Sati **handprints on Loha Pol**

Rising sheer out of a 125-m (410-ft) high rock, Mehrangarh is perhaps the most majestic of Rajasthan's forts. Described by an awe-struck Rudyard Kipling as "the creation of angels, fairies and giants", Mehrangarh's forbidding ramparts are in sharp contrast to the flamboyantly decorated palaces within. Founded by Rao Jodha in 1459, the sandstone fort was added to by later rulers, mostly between the mid-17th and mid-19th centuries. The royal apartments within the fort now form part of an outstanding museum.



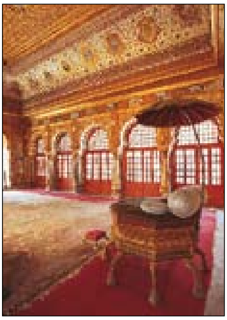
Chamundi Devi Mandir is dedicated to the goddess Durga in her wrathful aspect.

The Ramparts

The bastioned walls, parts of which are hewn out of the rock itself, are in places 24-m (79-ft) thick and 40-m (131-ft) high. Perched on them are old cannons.

Nagnechiaji Mandir has a 14th-century image of the goddess Kuldevi, the family deity of the rulers.

Zenana Chowk



★ Phool Mahal

Built between 1730 and 1750, this is the fort's most opulent chamber, richly gilded and painted. It was used for royal celebrations.

Suraj Pol is the entrance to the museum.

Palki Khana

Shringar Chowk

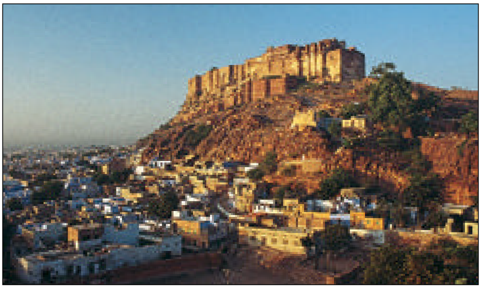
Carved balconies crown the towering bastions.

Shringar Chowk

This courtyard has the coronation throne of the Jodhpur rulers, made of white marble. Every ruler after Rao Jodha was crowned on it.

STAR SIGHTS

- ★ Phool Mahal
- ★ Moti Mahal

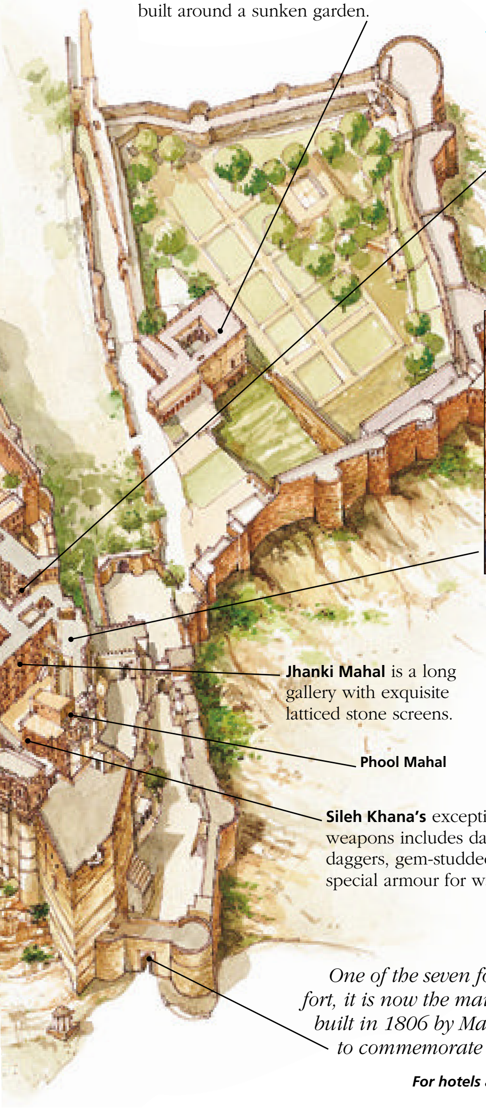


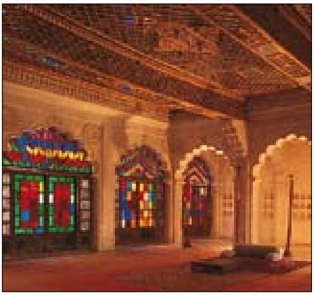
The blue-washed houses of Brahmapuri village, clustered below the ramparts of Mehrangarh Fort

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Mehrangarh Fort and Museum ○ *daily.* ℹ *Museum Trust, (0291) 254 8790.* 🎟 📷 *extra charges.* 🍴 🛍 🚻 ♿

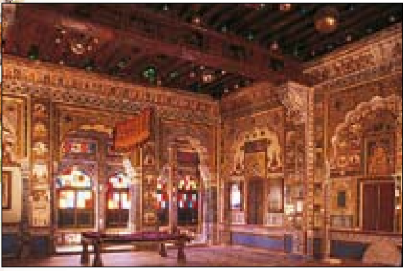
Chokelao Palace, now under restoration, was a pleasure palace built around a sunken garden.





★ Moti Mahal

Built between 1581 and 1595, this magnificent room was the Hall of Private Audience. Its ceiling is decorated with mirrors and gold leaf, and crushed seashells were mixed with plaster to give its walls a lustrous sheen.



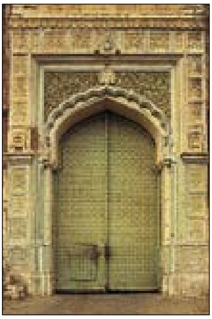
Takhat Mahal

This exuberantly painted room with a wooden ceiling was the favourite retreat of Maharaja Takhat Singh (r.1843–73), who had 30 queens and numerous concubines.

Jhanki Mahal is a long gallery with exquisite latticed stone screens.

Phool Mahal

Sileh Khana's exceptional collection of weapons includes damascened Mughal daggers, gem-studded shields, and special armour for war elephants.



Jai Pol

One of the seven fortified gates to the fort, it is now the main entrance. It was built in 1806 by Maharaja Man Singh to commemorate a victory in battle.

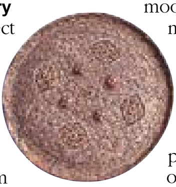
Exploring Mehrangarh Fort Museum

The Mehrangarh Fort Museum is justly regarded as the best of the many palace museums in Rajasthan. Its rich and varied collection includes a golden throne, fine miniature paintings, traditional costumes and fascinating weapons. Particularly magnificent are the skilfully restored royal chambers, which present a vivid picture of princely life and culture in Rajasthan.

Maharaja's cradle with a mechanical rocking system, in Jhanki Mahal

The entrance to the museum is through the Suraj Pol on the fort's southeastern side. Inside, to the right, is the **Palki Khana** with a collection of richly gilded palanquins. Along with the impressive elephant howdahs on display in the **Howdah Gallery** next door, these reflect the importance of grand processions in courtly life. Particularly impressive is a 17th-century howdah made of solid silver, a gift from the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan. Another treasure is a spectacular palanquin covered in gold leaf, dating to 1730. This stands in the **Daulat Khana** (Treasury Hall), just before the **Sileh Khana** with its superb collection of weapons.

From here, steps lead up to the **Umaid Mahal**, which exhibits miniature paintings of the Jodhpur School. Heavily influenced by the Mughal style, these paintings provide fascinating vignettes of life at court – the rulers riding camels with their courtesans, playing polo and leading ceremonial processions. Here too is a grand silk canopy, that was used by the rulers for outdoor camps.



A gem-studded rhino-hide shield

The next chamber, on the floor above, is the splendidly gilded, 18th-century **Phool Mahal** ("Flower Palace"), the Hall of Public Audience. It also has superb miniatures, including a set of 36 *Ragamala* paintings that depict the moods of various musical ragas.

The 19th-century **Takhat Mahal**, the chamber of a pleasure-loving ruler, is exuberantly painted with murals of Radha and Krishna and dancing maidens. The glass Christmas tree balls hanging from the ceiling were added in the 1930s. **Sardar Vilas**, just below Takhat Mahal, showcases Jodhpur's fine woodwork. Particularly striking is a door inlaid with ivory.

The next chamber is **Jhanki Mahal** or "Peeping Palace", so called because the women of the royal zenana could peep through its latticed stone screens to observe the ceremonies and festivities in the courtyards below. It now has a collection of royal cradles, including one with an ingenious mechanical rocking system, surmounted by guardian angels. From here a courtyard leads to the 16th-century **Moti Mahal** or "Pearl Palace". A palmist sits in the courtyard to foretell the futures of visitors.

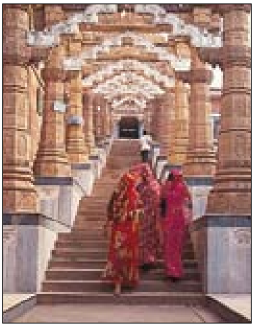
The museum also has a fine collection of Rajasthani turbans and folk music instruments. Rooms displaying costumes, royal tents and special treasures are under preparation.

Environs

Osian, 64 km (40 miles) northwest of Jodhpur, is the site of 16 outstanding Jain and Hindu temples. Built by wealthy traders between the 8th and 12th centuries, when Osian was an important stop on the caravan trade route to Central Asia, they represent the earliest phase of temple architecture in Rajasthan.

Famous for the rich variety and exuberance of their sculptural decoration are the 11 temples at the southern and western edge of Osian village. Of these, the most impressive is the 8th-century **Mahavira Temple** with a superb ceiling and 20 carved pillars holding up the main portico. Equally beautiful are the classically elegant 10th-century **Sun Temple** and the profusely sculpted **Vishnu** and **Harihara Temples**, from the 8th–9th centuries.

The other temples are on a hill east of the village, dominated by the 12th-century **Sachiya Mata Temple**, approached through a series of beautifully carved arches. This temple is particularly popular with infertile women who believe that Sachiya Mata, an incarnation of Durga, has special powers to help them bear children.



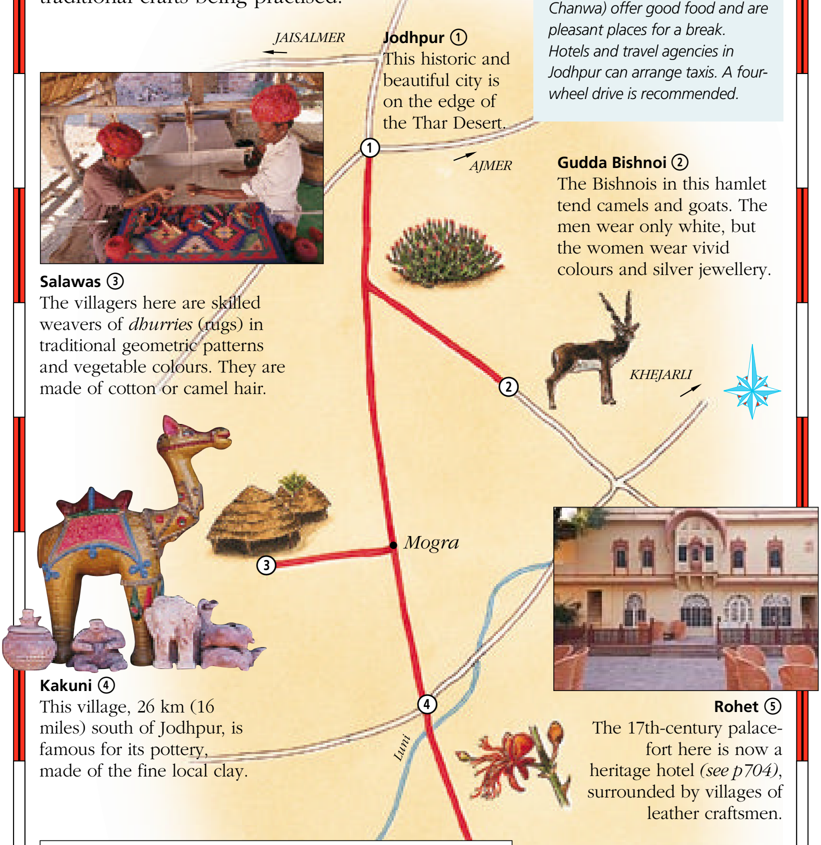
Sachiya Mata Temple, Osian

Tour of Marwar Crafts Villages ⑯

The arid countryside south of Jodhpur is dotted with villages, their mud and thatch huts inhabited by the Bishnois and communities of potters and weavers. A daylong tour of this area provides a memorable opportunity to observe the rhythm of daily life in these hamlets, experience the warm hospitality of the villagers, and see beautiful traditional crafts being practised.

TIPS FOR DRIVERS

Length: *55 km (34 miles).*
Getting around: *Allow 6–7 hours for the trip. Refreshments are available at Gudda Bishnoi, Salawas and Kakuni. The heritage hotels at Rohet and Luni (Fort Chanwa) offer good food and are pleasant places for a break. Hotels and travel agencies in Jodhpur can arrange taxis. A four-wheel drive is recommended.*



Jodhpur ①
This historic and beautiful city is on the edge of the Thar Desert.

Gudda Bishnoi ②
The Bishnois in this hamlet tend camels and goats. The men wear only white, but the women wear vivid colours and silver jewellery.

Salawas ③
The villagers here are skilled weavers of *dhurries* (rugs) in traditional geometric patterns and vegetable colours. They are made of cotton or camel hair.

Kakuni ④
This village, 26 km (16 miles) south of Jodhpur, is famous for its pottery, made of the fine local clay.

Rohet ⑤
The 17th-century palace-fort here is now a heritage hotel *(see p704)*, surrounded by villages of leather craftsmen.

THE BISHNOIS

The Bishnois, passionate environmentalists, are followers of a 15th-century sage, Jambeshwar, whose creed is contained in 29 *(bis noi)* principles. Most of these focus on environmental protection, and the Bishnois' faith bids them to protect every living being, if necessary with their lives. Thus, the otherwise timid blackbuck can be seen roaming freely near Bishnoi villages, confident that it will be unharmed. Bishnois believe they will be reborn as deer.

Bishnoi woman

Jaisalmer ⑰

Today a remote outpost in the Thar Desert, Jaisalmer was founded in the 12th century by Maharawal Jaisal of the Bhatti Rajput clan. It was once a flourishing trade centre, strategically located on the busy caravan trade route to Afghanistan and Central Asia. Its earlier rulers grew rich by looting gems, silk and opium from the caravans, but by the 16th century Jaisalmer had become a peaceful town, whose wealthy traders and rulers vied with each other to beautify their austere desert surroundings with splendid palaces and *havelis*. Made of the local golden-yellow sandstone, they are the most spectacular examples of the Rajasthani stonemason's art. In the 18th century, with the growth of sea ports at Surat and Bombay (Mumbai), Jaisalmer's importance dwindled. But the buildings from its golden age still stand, clustered around a magnificent fort *(see pp388–9)*.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Jaisalmer district. 285 kms (177 miles) W of Jodhpur. 👥 *58,300.* 🚉 🚌 ℹ *Tourist Reception Centre, Station Rd, (02992) 25 2406.* 🎉 *Desert Festival (Feb), Gangaur Festival (Mar/Apr).*

Manik Chowk

Located at the entrance to the fort, this is the main marketplace, where caravans used to halt in the past. The tiny shops sell camel hair blankets and gorgeous embroidered textiles. Desert nomads and their camels add to the bazaars' colour.

Badal Vilas

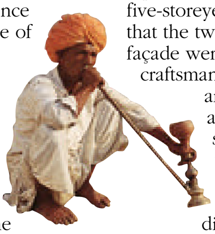
Near Amar Sagar Gate. ○ *daily.*

This late 19th-century palace is distinguished by its multi-tiered tower in the shape of a *tazia* – the ornately decorated tower of wood, metal and coloured paper, carried by Shia Muslims at Muharram *(see p669)*. The Tazia Tower of Badal Vilas, built in the mid-20th century, was a parting gift to the maharawal from the town's Shia stonecarvers, many of whom moved to Pakistan after Independence.

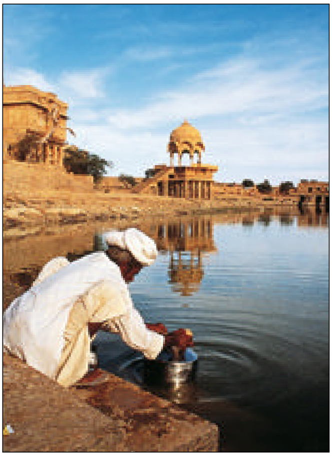
Gadisagar Lake

SE of the city walls.

This rainwater reservoir, built in 1367, was once the city's sole source of water. Lined with ghats and temples, it comes alive during the Gangaur festival (March/April), when the maharawal leads a procession here. The beautiful gateway leading to the tank was built by a royal courtesan, Telia, whose audacity so enraged the queens that they demanded its instant demolition. The quick-witted Telia immediately had a statue of Krishna installed on top, thereby ensuring not only that the gateway would stand, but that everyone would bow before passing through it.



Jaisalmeri smoking a hookah



Gadisagar Lake, lined with ghats

Salim Singh's Haveli

Near the Fort entrance. *Local guides can arrange visits for a fee.*

This *haveli* was built in 1815 by a powerful prime minister of Jaisalmer. Narrow at the base, its six storeys grow wider at each level, and all its 38 balconies have different designs. Peacocks dance between the arches on the topmost balcony, and blue cupolas cap the roof. The rear portion of this *haveli* was, sadly, damaged during the Gujarat earthquake in January 2001, but visitors are still allowed in.

Nathmalji's Haveli

Near Gandhi Chowk. *Local guides can arrange visits for a fee.*

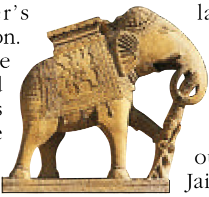
Built in 1855 by another prime minister of Jaisalmer, the particular charm of this five-storeyed mansion is that the two sides of its façade were carved by two craftsman-brothers, Hathu and Lallu. Though at first glance they seem identical, the details on each side are actually quite different. Besides the usual floral, geometric and animal patterns, this *haveli's* motifs also reflect new influences – a European-style horse and carriage, bicycles and steam engines.

Patwon ki Haveli

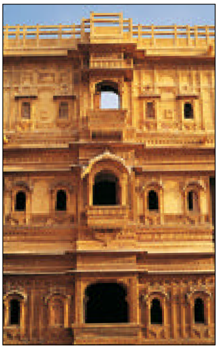
E of Nathmalji's Haveli. ○ *daily.*

This enormous and very elaborate *haveli* was built between 1805 and 1855 by Guman Chand Patwa, one of Jaisalmer's richest merchants and bankers, who dealt in silk, brocade and opium, and had a chain of trading stations stretching from Afghanistan to China. This six-storeyed mansion has five adjoining apartments for each of his sons, and 66 balconies. The curved eaves on the balconies suggest a fleet of sailing boats, and the numerous latticed windows are carved with breathtaking intricacy.

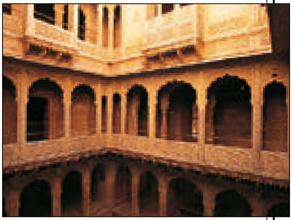
The Jaisalmer Haveli


Carved elephant

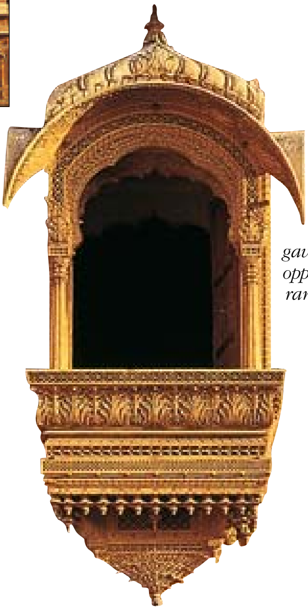
After the fort, Jaisalmer's *havelis* are its greatest attraction. Built in the 19th century by the town's merchants and ministers, these mansions dominate its labyrinthine lanes. The *havelis* of Salim Singh, Nathmalji and Patwon are the finest examples of this type of architecture, their golden stone façades so finely carved that they could be made of lace. Several generations of an extended family lived together in these huge mansions, which usually contained secluded women's quarters that outsiders could not enter. Jaisalmer's stonemasons still practise their art, doing restoration work in the fort, and working abroad for wealthy new patrons in the Gulf and Saudi Arabia.



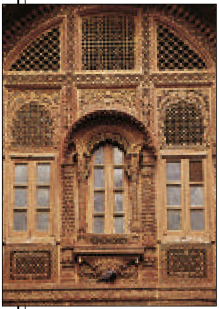
The entrance *of most* havelis *is on a plinth, raised high above street level, to prevent the desert sand from blowing into the rooms. The ground floor had no living rooms, and was usually used as a warehouse or storeroom.*



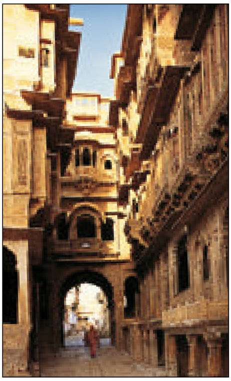
The inner courtyard, *found in all* havelis, *was a protected place for children to play in, and for women to attend to their daily chores in privacy.*



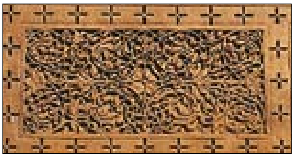
Jharokhas, *or projecting balconies, have curved* bangaldar *eaves. Their purpose was more decorative than functional, and they gave the stonemasons an opportunity to display the full range of their creativity and skill.*



Jalis, *or latticed stone screens, display a rich variety of patterns. They keep out the harsh desert sun but let in fresh air. They also enabled women to observe street life without being seen.*



Narrow streets *in the neighbourhood of Patwon ki Haveli, lined with intricately carved façades, retain their traditional ambience.*



Yellow sandstone *lends itself particularly well to fine carving. Soft when newly quarried, the stone gradually becomes harder with exposure.*

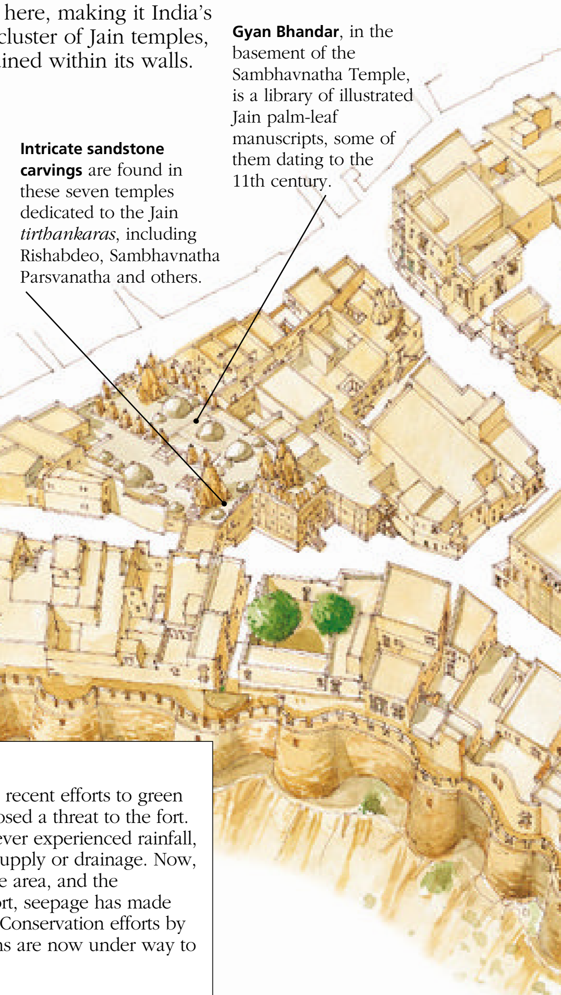
Jaisalmer Fort

Detail from Jaisalmer Fort

Jaisalmer Fort rises like a fabulous mirage out of the sands of the Thar Desert, the awesome contours of its 99 bastions softened by the golden hue of the stone. Built in 1156 by Maharawal Jaisal, and added to by his successors, this citadel stands on the peak of the 80-m (263-ft) high Trikuta Hill. In medieval times, Jaisalmer's entire population lived within the fort and even now, thousands of people reside here, making it India's only living fort. Royal palaces, a cluster of Jain temples, mansions and shops are all contained within its walls.

The southern ramparts, built of stone without any mortar

★ Jain Temples
Exquisitely carved Jain temples were built in the 15th and 16th centuries by the town's wealthy traders.



Gyan Bhandar, in the basement of the Sambhavnatha Temple, is a library of illustrated Jain palm-leaf manuscripts, some of them dating to the 11th century.

Intricate sandstone carvings are found in these seven temples dedicated to the Jain *tirthankaras*, including Rishabdeo, Sambhavnatha Parsvanatha and others.

The ramparts, with an inner parallel wall, have huge cannonballs perched on top, ready to crush invaders.

JAISALMER IN JEOPARDY

The growth of tourism together with recent efforts to green the nearby desert have, ironically, posed a threat to the fort. Built for an arid climate that hardly ever experienced rainfall, the fort had no provision for water supply or drainage. Now, with rising ground water levels in the area, and the introduction of piped water in the fort, seepage has made the golden stone crumble in places. Conservation efforts by Indian and international organizations are now under way to save this unique fort and town.

The 12th-century Jaisalmer Fort, threatened by rising damp

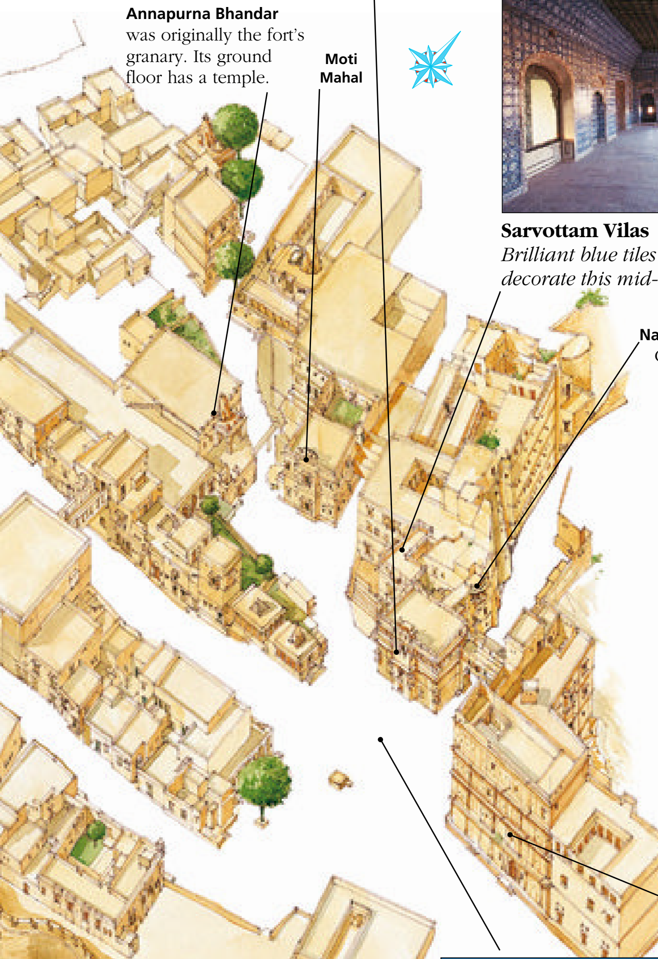
STAR SIGHTS

- ★ Jain Temples
- ★ Moti Mahal
- ★ Dussehra Chowk

Royal Complex
The seven-storeyed palace complex consists of several interconnected palaces, built between the 16th and 19th centuries.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Jaisalmer Fort. ℹ *Rajasthan Tourism, Station Rd, (02992) 25 2406.* ○ *daily.* ✋ 📷 *extra charges.* ♿ 🚻 🍴 🛍 **Jain Temples** ○ *daily.* 📷 *extra charges.* **Gyan Bhandar** ○ *daily.*

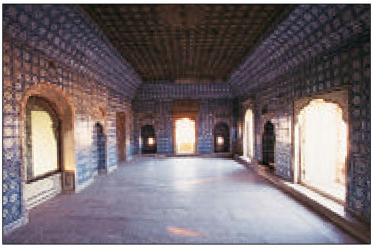


Annapurna Bhandar was originally the fort's granary. Its ground floor has a temple.

Moti Mahal

Naqqar Khana, or "Drummers' Gallery", has a richly carved octagonal balcony.

Rani Mahal



Sarvottam Vilas
Brilliant blue tiles and glass mosaic work decorate this mid-18th century palace.

★ Moti Mahal
Floral paintings and carved doors embellish this 18th-century palace.

★ Dussehra Chowk
Festivals, royal performances and parades took place in this open plaza, framed by the palace complex. The rulers' marble throne overlooks the plaza.

Exploring Jaisalmer's Outer Sights

The environs of Jaisalmer are dotted with sites of both architectural and natural beauty. These include beautiful temples, the haunting ruins of the old capital, a fascinating desert village, rolling sand dunes, and the habitat of a rare desert bird, the great Indian bustard.

Manganiyar musicians, whose ballads recount Jaisalmer's history

Bhattiani Rani Temple

2 km (1.3 miles) S of fort. ○ *daily.*

This secluded Hindu shrine was built in honour of a 19th-century Jaisalmer princess who, surprisingly, committed *sati* on her brother-in-law's funeral pyre. A clan of Muslim musicians, the Manganiyars, are the caretakers of the temple, and recount this story, with its intriguing undertones, in their soulful ballads about Jaisalmer's history.

Bada Bagh

7 km (4 miles) N of fort.

The royal cenotaphs, with elaborately carved ceilings and fine equestrian statues of the rulers, are set in a green oasis. Next to them is the Bhaironji Temple, frequented by childless women who offer their silver girdles to the deity, in the hope that he will cure their infertility.

Lodurva

15 km (9 miles) NW of Jaisalmer.

The capital of the Bhatti Rajputs before they built the fort at Jaisalmer, Lodurva was abandoned after it was sacked by Muslim invaders in the 11th century. A group of Jain temples dominates this site, where the remains of many other fine buildings lie concealed beneath the desert sands. A beautiful *torana* leads to the main temple, which houses a metal sculpture of the Kalpavriksha ("Celestial Tree"). It is believed to have wish-fulfilling powers.

Akal Fossil Park

17 km (11 miles) SE of Jaisalmer. ○ *daily.*

Extraordinary fossilized tree trunks, some of them 180 million years old, can be seen in this park. They bear witness to the fact that this arid area was once covered with dense forest.

Great Indian bustard

Khuri

40 km (25 miles) SW of Jaisalmer.

Set among sand dunes, this little village is a superb example of desert architecture. Functional as well as beautiful, the village houses have thick mud walls that provide protection against the fierce desert heat and winds, while the paintings that decorate their exteriors bring colour and beauty to the brown, parched environs.

Desert National Park

43 km (27 miles) W of Jaisalmer. *For permission, contact Collector's Office, Jaisalmer, (02992) 25 2201.* *Jeep & Camel safaris.*

This fascinating park is spread over 3,162 sq km (1,221 sq miles) of scrub and sandy wasteland, close to the border with Pakistan. Its star attraction is the great Indian bustard *(Choriotis nigriceps)*, a large bird with a height of 1.2 m (4 ft). The bustard had been hunted almost to extinction, and only about 1,000 remain now, but sightings are likely here. Other wildlife includes sand grouse, several species of falcon and vulture, desert fox, and *chinkara* (Indian gazelle).

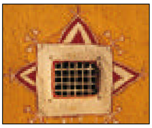
Barmer ⑲

Barmer district. 160 km (99 miles) SE of Jaisalmer. ℹ *Rajasthan Tourism, Khartal, (02982) 22 2956.* *Tilwara Cattle Fair (Jan/Feb), Thar Desert Festival (Mar).*

This remote desert town, whose arid soil cannot support agriculture, has become a major centre for desert handicrafts. Woodcarving, blockprinted textiles, embroidery and carpet weaving are the main source of livelihood for its people. They also lavish their skills on their mud huts, which are beautifully decorated with geometric and floral patterns. Barmer buzzes with activity during the annual Tilwara Fair (January/February), one of the many large cattle fairs in Rajasthan.

Visitors on a camel safari near Jaisalmer

Camel Safari around Jaisalmer ⑱



Window of a desert mud house

The fascinating desertscape around Jaisalmer is best explored on a camel safari. A two-day excursion takes in historic sights and villages of sheep and camel herders. Overnight stays in tents offer magical dawns and sunsets amid the dunes. Cushions are provided, but riders are advised to carry an extra one, to help soften the effects of the camel's lurching gait.

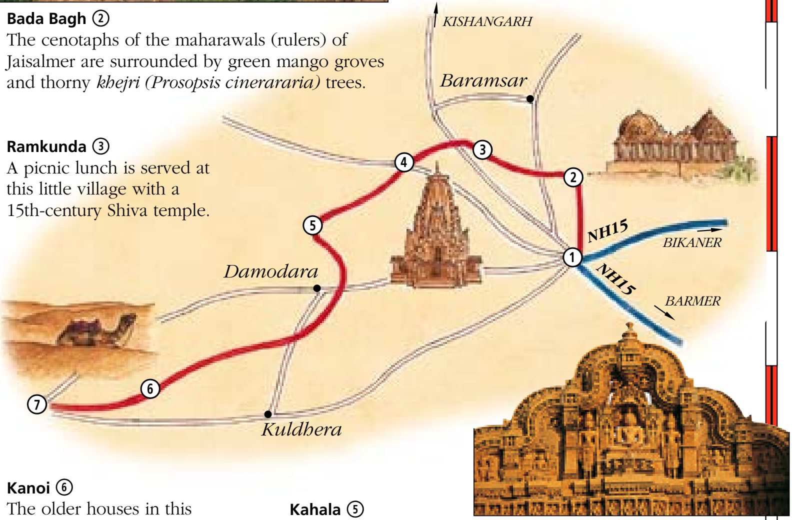
TIPS FOR RIDERS

Duration: *Two days and two nights.* ***Day 1:*** *Jaisalmer to Lodurva via Bada Bagh and Ramkunda, 18 km (11 miles).* ***Day 2:*** *Lodurva to Sam via Kahala and Kanoi, 20 km (12 miles); Sam to Jaisalmer (by jeep), 45 km (28 miles).* ***Overnight stays:*** *Camps at Lodurva and Sam. For more details on safaris see p751; for tour operators see p755.*

Jaisalmer ①
The camels set off from the First Gate of Jaisalmer's magnificent 12th-century fort.

Bada Bagh ②
The cenotaphs of the maharawals (rulers) of Jaisalmer are surrounded by green mango groves and thorny *khejri (Prosopsis cineraria)* trees.

Ramkunda ③
A picnic lunch is served at this little village with a 15th-century Shiva temple.



Kanoi ⑥
The older houses in this village are painted with flowers, animals and birds. The village craftsmen make elaborately carved camel saddles inlaid with brass.

Kahala ⑤
This hamlet of mud houses is inhabited by herders of goats and sheep. They also weave attractive blankets.

Lodurva ④
The night is spent at the old capital of the maharawals, which has lovely Jain temples. Dinner is served under a star-studded sky.

0 km 5

0 miles 5

KEY

🟥 Tour route

▭ Other roads

🟦 National highway

Sam ⑦
Rippling sand dunes stretch as far as the eye can see. The 45-km (28-mile) journey back to Jaisalmer the next morning is by jeep.

The City Palace, Udaipur *(see pp400–401)*, reflected in the waters of Lake Pichola ▷

RESTAURANT

The intricately carved Vimala Vasahi Temple

Mount Abu ⑳

Sirohi district. 185 km (115 miles) W of Udaipur. 👥 *22,100.* 🚉 *Abu Rd, 20 km (12 miles) SE of town centre, then bus.* 🚌 ℹ *opp main bus station, (02974) 23 5151.* 🎪 *Summer Festival (Jun).*

Rajasthan's only hill station, Mount Abu has one of India's most spectacular sights – the **Dilwara Jain Temples**. This group of five marble temples is situated on a hill 3 km (2 miles) northeast of the town. The two most outstanding are the **Vimala Vasahi Temple** and the **Luna Vasahi Temple** which have incredibly intricate and delicate carvings. The sculptural details on the various doorways, archways, pillars and ceilings of both these temples are simply breathtaking, the marble worked so finely that in places it is almost translucent.

The Vimala Vasahi Temple, dedicated to the first Jain *tirthankara*, Adinath, was built in 1031 by Vimala Shah, a wealthy prime minister of the Solanki kings of Gujarat. A statue of him seated on an elephant is in a pavilion to the right of the entrance. Inside, graceful nymphs and musicians, spirited horses and elephants adorn the arches and pillars, and the superb 11-tiered domed ceiling in the main hall. The inner sanctum has a statue of Adinath in tranquil meditation, while 52 carved niches contain images of the other *tirthankaras*.

The Luna Vasahi Temple, dedicated to Neminath, the 22nd Jain *tirthankara*, dates to 1231 and is even more ornately carved. Its most glorious feature, the main hall, has a magnificent lotus-shaped, tiered pendant carved from a single block of marble, descending from its domed ceiling. Behind the main shrine is the fascinating Hall of Donors, with a series of figures mounted on elephants, some in black marble. There are also life-size statues of the donors and their wives, with every detail of their dress and jewellery exquisitely and painstakingly carved.

Dancer, Luna Vasahi Temple

The focal point of Mount Abu town is **Nakki Lake**, ringed by colonial mansions dating to the late 19th century, and the summer palaces of Rajput rulers. The curiously shaped **Toad's Rock** overlooks the lake, and **Sunset Point**, southwest of the lake, offers some spectacular views from a stone terrace.

About 4 km (2.5 miles) below Mount Abu, just off the main highway leading to the town, is the historic **Gaumukh** ("Cow's Mouth") **Temple** with a natural spring flowing from the mouth of a marble cow.

🏛 **Dilwara Jain Temples**
○ *daily.* ● *to menstruating women. Leather articles are not allowed inside.*

Environs

Achalgarh, 8 km (5 miles) beyond Dilwara, has the ruins of a 15th-century fort, and a Shiva temple. The latter has a statue of Nandi made with over 4,000 kg (8,819 lbs) of gold, silver, brass and copper. A five-minute walk from the temple is **Guru Shikhar**, Rajasthan's highest point at 1,721 m (5,646 ft). It is marked by a small but exquisite Vishnu temple.

Ranakpur ㉑

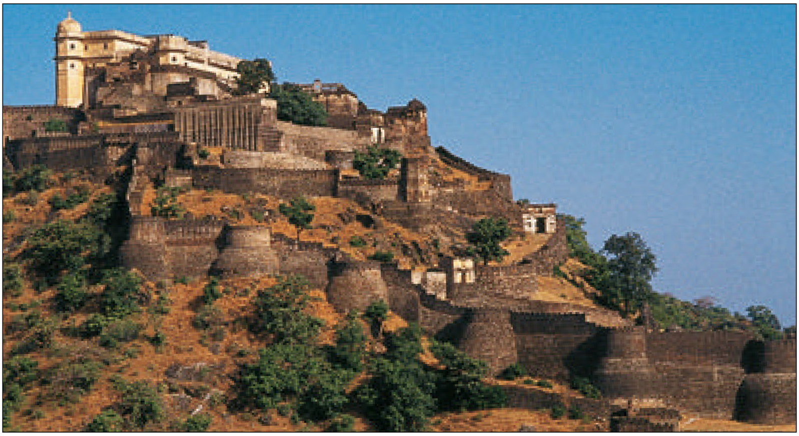
Rajsamand district. 90 km (56 miles) NW of Udaipur. 🚌 **Temple Complex** ○ *daily.* ● *to menstruating women. Leather articles are not allowed inside.*

Set in a secluded, wooded valley of the Aravalli Hills, the 15th-century Ranakpur temple complex, dominated by the great **Adinath Temple**, is one of the five great holy places of the Jain faith. The grand scale and sheer architectural complexity of the white marble temple distinguish it as perhaps the single most impressive example of Western Indian temple architecture *(see pp396–7)*.

The temple has an unusual four-sided plan, with four separate entrances. Each entrance leads through a veritable forest of columns, and a number of beautifully ornamented halls and chapels, to the central sanctum containing a four-faced image of Adinath.

Each of the temple's 1,444 pillars is carved with different patterns of floral motifs, and the play of light and shadow

View of the Jain temple complex at Ranakpur



The winding ramparts of the indomitable Kumbhalgarh Fort

on the pillars, as the sun moves from east to west each day, is one of the glories of this monument. Equally stunning is the superb filigree carving on the concentric ceiling pendants, and the exuberant grace of the goddesses who form the support brackets. On one of the columns facing the sanctum, a carved panel with two figures on it depicts Dharna Shah, the builder of the temple, who was a minister of the maharana of Mewar, and his architect, Depa.

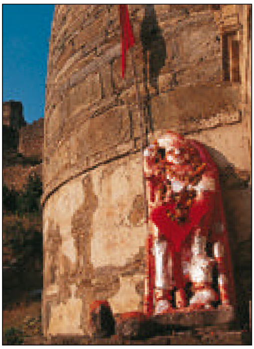
A wall topped with spires surrounds this serene temple complex, which also has a Hindu Sun Temple, and two other Jain temples. Of these, the 15th-century Parsvanatha Temple is distinguished by the exceptionally fine pierced stonework on its windows.

Kumbhalgarh ㉒

Rajsamand district. 63 km (39 miles) N of Udaipur. 🚉 *Kankroli, 35 km (21 miles) SE of Kumbhalgarh, then bus.* 🚌

Like a gigantic brown snake, the great ramparts of Kumbhalgarh Fort wind along the rugged contours of the Aravalli Hills for 36 km (22 miles). This massive 15th-century fort, strategically located at a height of 1,050 m (3,445 ft) along the border between Marwar (Jodhpur) and Mewar (Udaipur), was known as "The Eye of Mewar", because it offered a commanding view of the countryside for miles around. Built by Maharana Kumbha (r.1433–68), who also built the great fort of Chittorgarh (see p330), Kumbhalgarh was justly reputed to be the most impregnable fort in Rajasthan. Its ramparts are wide enough for six horsemen to ride abreast, and seven fortified gates, studded with threatening spikes, lead to its entrance.

The crenellated walls of the fort enclose the smaller fortress of Kartargarh, several palaces and temples now in ruins, fields, water reservoirs and stables. Standing at the highest point of the fort is the **Badal Mahal**, a 19th-century addition with airy chambers and fine wall paintings of hunting scenes. The 15th-century **Neelkantha Temple**, which also lies within the fort, has a huge Shivalinga and is still in use.



A deity on the fort wall, believed to prevent evil happenings

Another interesting temple, the **Navachoki Mamdeva Temple**, is in a gorge to the east of Kartargarh. It contains several slabs of black granite inscribed with the history of Mewar, the earliest slab dating to 1491. Next to it is the cenotaph of Maharana Kumbha.

Kumbhalgarh was also the birthplace of Maharana Pratap (1540–97), a great warrior king famous for his heroic stand against the armies of the Mughal emperor Akbar.

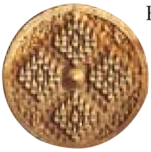
Environs

The **Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary** covers 578 sq km (223 sq miles) of the Aravalli Hills, west of the fort, on the leeward side. Panther, flying squirrel, wolf and many bird species can be seen here.

Kankroli, 35 km (21 miles) southeast of Kumbhalgarh, has the 17th-century Dwarkadhish Temple on the southern shore of Rajsamand Lake. The western shore is lined with lovely marble pavilions and ghats.

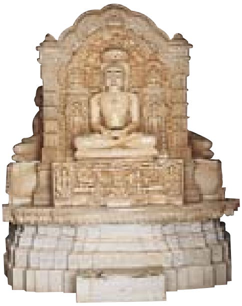
The charming little town of **Deogarh**, 55 km (34 miles) north of Kumbhalgarh, set among lakes and hills, has the 17th-century Rajmahal Palace with exquisite wall murals, and the Anjaneshwar Mahadev Temple in a cave in the hillside. Deogarh is also a popular base for horse safaris which explore this picturesque part of Mewar.

Marblework in Jain Temples



Detail from Ranakpur

Rajasthan's most outstanding Jain temples, at Ranakpur and at Dilwara in Mount Abu *(see p394)*, are breathtaking in the wealth and variety of their sculptural ornamentation. Made of white marble quarried at Makrana, which also provided the marble for the Taj Mahal, the Ranakpur and Dilwara temples are architectual marvels. Above all, they are testimony to the incredible artistry of the marble carvers who created these masterpieces. Visitors should use binoculars to fully appreciate the astounding work on the ceilings and pillars.

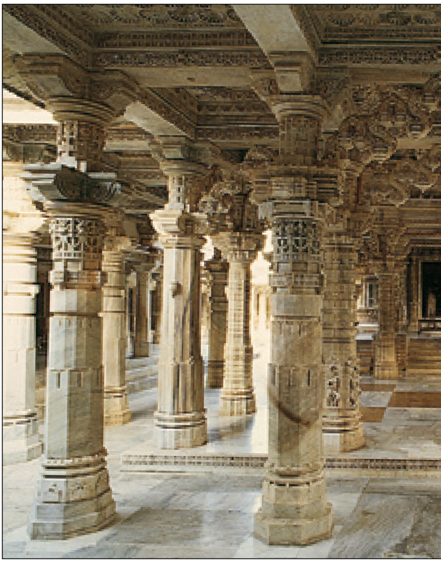


This four-faced image of Adinath, *the first* tirthankara, *stands in Ranakpur's main sanctum. It faces the four cardinal directions.*

THE JAIN RELIGION

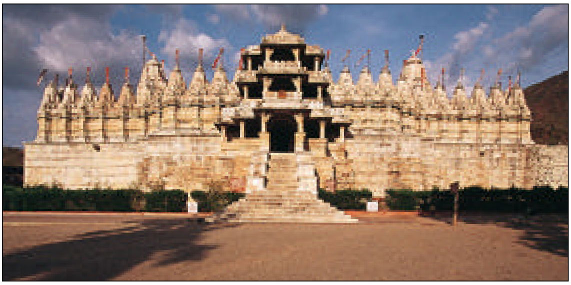
Jain nuns with covered mouths

Jainism, founded in the 6th century BC, is based on a doctrine of non-violence towards all living beings. Jains are strict vegetarians, and the more orthodox ones cover their mouths to avoid inadvertently swallowing living organisms. Jains believe in 24 *tirthankaras* or crossing-makers, enlightened beings who guide others across the "river of transmigration" (the journey of the soul from one life to the next). The first of the *tirthankaras* was Adinath, also known as Rishabdeo, and the last was Mahavira (born in 540 BC). Regarded as the religion's founder, his 2,600th birth anniversary was celebrated in 2001. Jainism attracted many followers among the wealthy traders and merchants of Western India, who were also politically powerful as financiers and ministers in Rajput princely states. As acts of devotion and penance, they financed the building of several elaborately carved temples in Gujarat and Rajasthan.



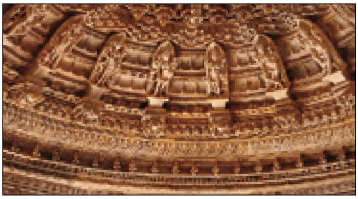
HALL OF PILLARS
A forest of carved columns connected by wavy arches leads to the main sanctum at Dilwara's Vimala Vasahi Temple. It was built in the 11th century.

EXTERIOR
The uncarved exterior of Ranakpur's 15th-century Adinath Temple contrasts sharply with the profuse decoration inside. This symbolizes the Jain belief in the insignificance of outward forms, and the importance of a rich inner life.

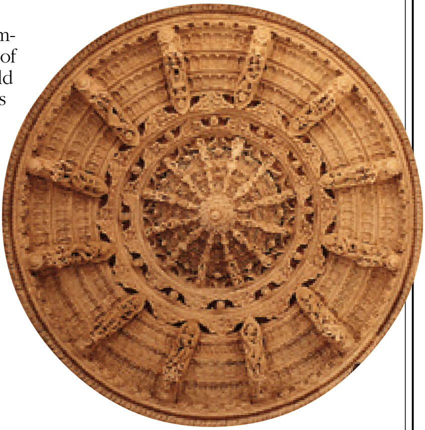


CORBELLED CEILINGS

The ceilings are carved in concentric tiers to symbolize the Jain view of the universe as a series of cosmic cycles. Marble carvers were paid in gold according to the weight of the marble shavings they presented at the end of each day's work.

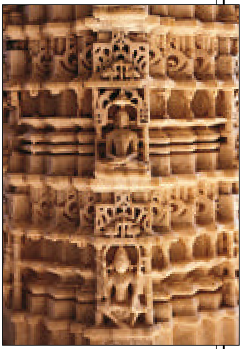


Dancers and deities, *gracefully sculpted, are the struts that support the ceiling.*



This Ranakpur ceiling *is a typical example of the Rajasthani marble carvers' art. It is so finely worked that the marble is translucent in places.*

Sculptured panels *at Ranakpur show dancers full of grace and movement.*



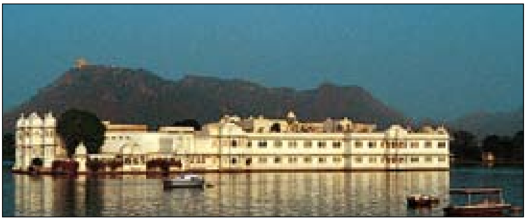
Pillars *in Dilwara are densely carved with floral motifs and figures in niches. No two pillars are identical in their ornamentation.*

Kalpavalli medallions, *with their exquisite patterns of foliage, tendrils and flowers, feature at both Dilwara and Ranakpur.*

The Parsvanatha plaque *shows the 23rd* tirthankara *protected by a multi-headed cobra. It is set into the southern wall of the Adinath Temple at Ranakpur.*

Udaipur ㉓

This fairy-tale city, with its marble palaces and lakes surrounded by a ring of hills, was founded by Maharana Udai Singh in 1559, and became the capital of Mewar after the fall of Chittorgarh in 1567 *(see p402)*. The rulers of Mewar, who belonged to the Sisodia clan of Rajputs, traced their dynasty back to AD 566. Fiercely independent, they refused matrimonial alliances with the Mughals, and took great pride in their reputation as the prime defenders of Rajput honour. The city is dominated by the massive City Palace, which overlooks Lake Pichola with its romantic island palaces. Picturesque *havelis*, ghats and temples line the lake front, with the lively bazaars of the old walled city stretching behind them.



Jag Niwas, or the Lake Palace, in its magical setting on Lake Pichola

City Palace

See pp400–401.

Jag Mandir

Lake Pichola. ○ *daily.* *City Palace Jetty.* **Jag Niwas** ***Tel*** *(0294) 252 8016.* *open to non-residents.*

Jag Mandir, with its lush gardens and marble chambers exquisitely inlaid with coloured stone, was built in 1620. Eight stone elephants stand solemn guard at its entrance. Between 1623 and 1624, this island palace provided refuge to Prince Khurram (who would later become the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan) while he rebelled against his father. It is believed to have inspired many of his ideas for the Taj Mahal.

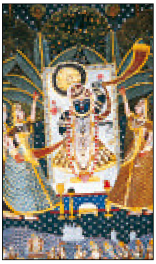
Jag Niwas, or the Lake Palace, built between 1734 and 1751, was once a royal summer retreat and is now one of the world's great hotels *(see p705)*. It is also a popular location for film shoots (including James Bond's *Octopussy*). Both palaces can be seen on a boat tour of Lake Pichola.

Jagdish Mandir

Moti Chhohta Rd. ○ *daily.*

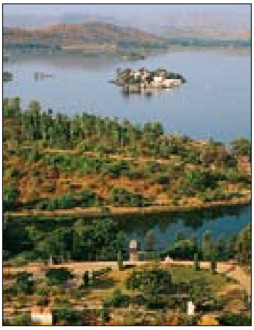
Bagore ki Haveli *Gangaur Ghat.* ***Tel*** *(0294) 25 3858*

This 17th-century temple, just north of the City Palace's main gate, has an enormous black stone image of Vishnu in its profusely carved main shrine. The entrance is flanked by stone elephants, and a superb bronze image of Garuda (the mythical bird who is Vishnu's vehicle) stands in front of the temple. Nearby, at Gangaur Ghat, is the 18th-century **Bagore ki Haveli**, now a museum exhibiting Udaipur's traditional arts and crafts, costumes, musical instruments and marblework. Folk music and dance performances are held here every evening at 7pm.



Pichhwai **painting**

The old walled city, a jumble of shops and houses, many with beautifully painted façades, lies east of the Jagdish Mandir. In its narrow, lanes are the **Bapu** and **Bara Bazaars**, selling wooden toys, puppets, textiles, jewels and *pichhwais*.



A view of Lake Pichola, with the Jag Mandir Palace on an island

Fateh Sagar Lake

Fateh Sagar Rd.

North of Lake Pichola is Fateh Sagar Lake, with a garden café on its island. Overlooking it is Moti Magri Hill with a statue of Udaipur's great 16th-century warrior, Maharana Pratap, and his valiant steed, Chetak.

Saheliyon ki Bari

Saheli Marg. ○ *daily.*

This delightful 18th-century retreat in the north of the city (its name means "Garden of the Maids of Honour") has ornamental fountains, a lotus pool and a rose garden. It was built for a queen of Udaipur, whose dowry included 48 maids.

Ahar

Ashok Nagar Rd. **Museum** ○ *Sat–Thu.* ● *public hols.*

Located 3 km (2 miles) east of Udaipur, Ahar has the impressive cenotaphs of 19 Mewar rulers, and a small archaeological museum.

Environs

Shilpgram, 8 km (5 miles) northwest of Udaipur, is a lively ethnographic crafts village, with artisans, folk performers, and replicas of traditional houses. Camel rides are also available.

Pavilion in the Saheliyon ki Bari, an 18th-century queen's garden

Nagda's Saas-Bahu Temples, seen through the finely-carved *torana*

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Udaipur district. 269 km (167 miles) S of Jodhpur. 👥 *389,400.* ✈ *25 km (16 miles) E of city centre.* 🚆 🚌 ℹ *Rajasthan Tourism, Suraj Pol, (0294) 241 1535.* 🎉 *Gangaur Festival (Mar/Apr), Mewar Festival (Apr).*

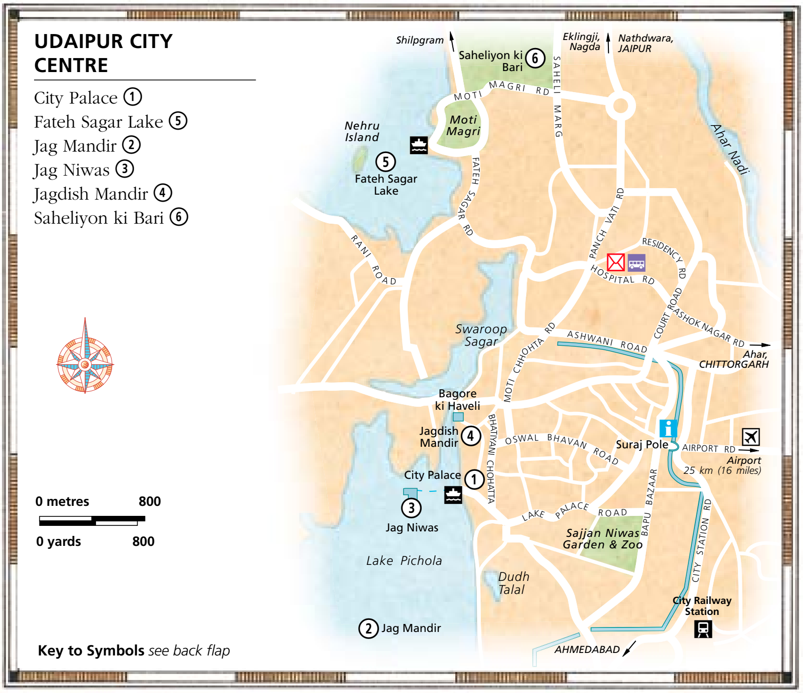
Eklingji, 22 km (14 miles) northeast of Udaipur, is a complex of 108 temples and shrines, dedicated to Lord Shiva. It marks the site where the founder of the Mewar ruling dynasty, Bappa Rawal, received special blessings from a sage who lived here. The main temple dates to the 16th century. Built of marble and granite, it includes an impressive pillared hall and a four-faced image of Shiva crafted in black marble, with a silver Nandi facing it.

Nagda, a short distance away from Eklingji, is worth a visit for the Saas-Bahu Temples ("Mother and Daughter-in-law Temples"), twin structures dedicated to Vishnu. The 11th-century temples are entered through a finely carved *torana* and are renowned for their elaborate sculptures depicting amorous couples and scenes from the epic *Ramayana*.

One of Rajasthan's main pilgrimage sites is the 18th-century Shrinathji Temple at **Nathdwara**, 48 km (30 miles) northeast of Udaipur. The main deity is Lord Krishna, known locally as Shrinathji. His black stone image was brought here from Mathura *(see p152)* to save it from destruction by the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb in the 17th century. Beautiful painted cloth hangings known as *pichhwais* are hung behind it. Non-Hindus cannot enter the temple, but Nathdwara town's picturesque bazaar, with its *pichhwai* painters at work, is worth a visit. *Pichhwais,* one of the most vibrant forms of Indian painting, are done on stiff cloth in vegetable and mineral colours. They depict 24 scenes from the Krishna legend, each linked with a particular festival or holy day. At the centre of each painting is a stylised image of Lord Krishna, with dusky skin, slanting eyes and intricate jewellery, set against a background of verdant foliage, birds, animals and skyscapes. Around the deity are cows, milkmaids and devotees.

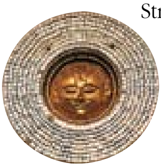
UDAIPUR CITY CENTRE

City Palace ①
Fateh Sagar Lake ⑤
Jag Mandir ②
Jag Niwas ③
Jagdish Mandir ④
Saheliyon ki Bari ⑥



Shilpgram
Saheliyon ki Bari ⑥
Eklingji, Nagda
Nathdwara, JAIPUR
SAHELI MARG
MAGRI RD
MOTI
Moti Magri
Nehru Island
⑤ Fateh Sagar Lake
FATEH SAGAR RD
Ahar Nadi
RANI ROAD
PANCH VATI RD
RESIDENCY RD
HOSPITAL RD
COURT ROAD
ASHOK NAGAR RD
Ahar, CHITTORGARH
ASHWANI ROAD
Swaroop Sagar
MOTI CHHOHTA RD
Bagore ki Haveli
Jagdish Mandir ④
BHATIYANI CHOHATTA
OSWAL BHAVAN ROAD
Suraj Pole
AIRPORT RD
Airport 25 km (16 miles)
City Palace ①
③ Jag Niwas
LAKE PALACE ROAD
BAPU BAZAAR
Sajjan Niwas Garden & Zoo
CITY STATION RD
Lake Pichola
Dudh Talal
City Railway Station
② Jag Mandir
AHMEDABAD
0 metres 800
0 yards 800
Key to Symbols see back flap

Udaipur: City Palace

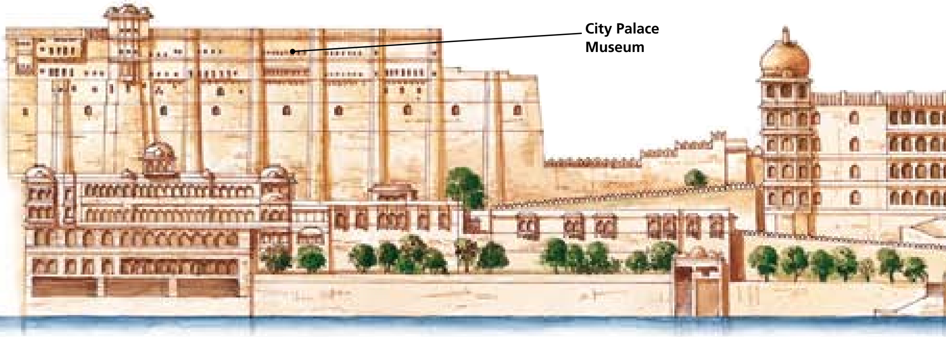


Royal sun symbol

Stretching along the eastern shore of Lake Pichola, Udaipur's City Palace is a fascinating combination of Rajput military architecture and Mughal-style decorative techniques. Its stern, fortress-like façade, topped by a profusion of graceful balconies, cupolas and turrets, has been aptly described by one writer as a massive plain cake topped with fabulous icing. The largest palace in Rajasthan, covering an area of 2 ha (5 acres), the City Palace is actually a complex of several palaces, built or added to by 22 different maharanas between the 16th and 20th centuries. Much of it is now a museum, and parts of it are luxury hotels.

Fateh Prakash

This early 20th-century palace, now a hotel, has a magnificent Durbar Hall and a gallery of crystal furniture.



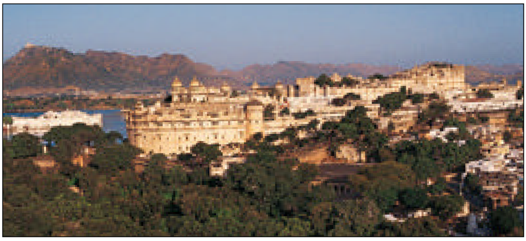
Rajya Angan Chowk, with a temple to the goddess Dhuni Mata

Exploring the City Palace

The older section of the City Palace complex dates from 1568. Behind its fortified walls is a maze of royal apartments, reception halls and courtyards. They are linked to each other by narrow passages and steep staircases – a feature typical of Rajput palaces of that period, designed to confuse invaders. The superb **City Palace Museum** is spread out through several palaces in this section, and is entered through the imposing **Tripolia Gate** (built in 1713). Above the entrance is the Mewar crest – a large Sun face (reinforcing the Sisodia clan's claim to be descended from the Sun), flanked by Rajput and Bhil warriors (the tribal Bhils, skilled archers, played a heroic role in Mewar's great battles). Beyond this is the **Ganesh Deorhi Gate** where entrance tickets for the museum are checked. It leads into a courtyard decorated with frescoes of horses and elephants, and a marble relief of the god Ganesha surrounded by dazzling mirror and glass inlay.

The next courtyard is the **Rajya Angan Chowk**, from where steps lead to the **Chandra Mahal** (built in 1620). One of the loveliest palaces in the complex, it has beautiful columns, fretwork windows and striking marble reliefs of Rajput women, one of whom carries a shield. There is a magical view of Lake Pichola and its island palaces from here.

Another flight of steps from here leads to the charming **Bari Mahal** (built in 1699). Perched 27 m (89 ft) above the ground, it is built on a terraced hillside that is com-



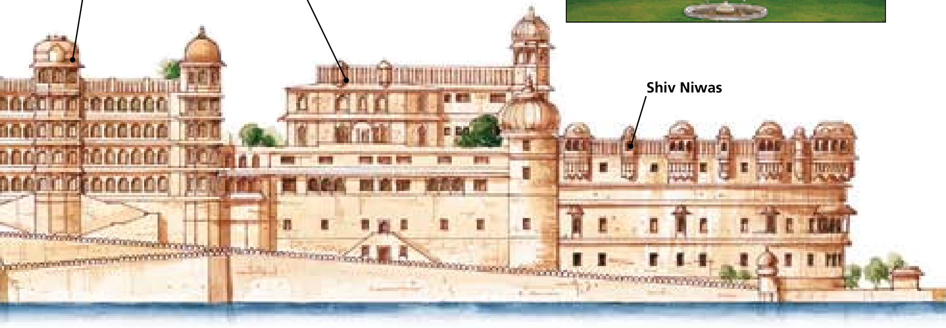
A view of the City Palace, on the eastern shore of Lake Pichola

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

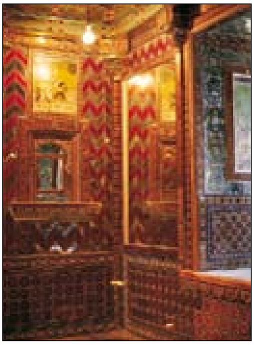
City Palace Complex
Tel *(0294) 252 8016.* ○ *daily.*
✋ 📷 *restricted.* 🚻 **Museum**
📷 *extra charges.* ✋ ☕
Fateh Prakash 🍴 *open to non-residents.* **Shiv Niwas** 🍴 *open to non-residents.*

Shiv Niwas

This sumptuously decorated crescent-shaped palace was the royal guesthouse and is now a luxury hotel (see p705).



Shambhu Niwas is now home to the maharana's descendants.
Fateh Prakash
Shiv Niwas



Kanch Burj, with its dazzling decoration of red and silver glass

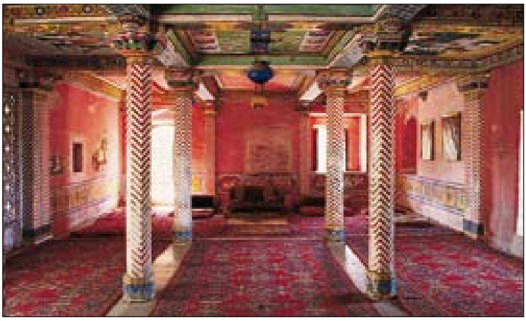
pletely enclosed within the palace walls. Deep halls with receding rows of carved arches open into an enchanting courtyard with a marble pool in the middle. Tall *neem* trees stand around it, providing dappled shade.

The Bari Mahal leads to the **Dilkhushal Mahal** (built in 1620) with two remarkable chambers – the Kanch Burj ("Glass Turret") inlaid with red and silver glass, and the Krishna Niwas which exhibits outstanding Mewar miniature paintings *(see p405)*. This was the room of 16-year-old Princess Krishna Kumari, who committed suicide in 1807 when rival suitors from Jodhpur and Jaipur threatened to go to war over her hand.

To the left of this palace is the ornate **Moti Mahal**, the chamber of the dissolute Maharana Jawan Singh (r.1828–38), who once promised a dancing girl half his kingdom if she could walk a tightrope across Lake Pichola. The girl had almost reached when the maharana's alarmed courtiers cut the rope, and the dancer drowned. Still further left is the **Mor Chowk** ("Peacock Courtyard") with its brilliantly coloured 19th-century mosaics of three dancing peacocks.

The southern end of the City Palace complex has three other opulent palaces built in the late 19th and early 20th centuries – **Shambhu Niwas** where the descendants of the rulers now live; **Fateh Prakash** with its magnificent Durbar Hall, fine portraits and gallery of crystal furniture; and the semi-circular **Shiv Niwas** built as the royal guesthouse (Queen Elizabeth II once stayed here). Fateh Prakash and Shiv Niwas are now luxury hotels, but are open to non-residents for tours and meals.

Mosaic of dancing peacock in the Mor Chowk



A colourfully painted chamber in Juna Mahal, Dungarpur

Dungarpur ㉔

Dungarpur district. 110 km (68 miles) S of Udaipur. 👥 *42,550.* 🚌 🎪 *Vagad Festival (Jan/Feb), Baneshwar Festival (Feb).*

This remote, relatively unknown town boasts some unexpected artistic treasures. Dominating Dungarpur is the seven-storeyed **Juna Mahal**, built in the 13th century on a large rock. The interior of this palace-fort, in contrast to its rather battered exterior, glows with exuberant ornamentation, and contains some of the most beautiful frescoes to be seen in Rajasthan. Remarkably well-preserved, these include a series of erotic paintings from the *Kama Sutra* in the erstwhile ruler's bedroom, on the top floor of the palace.

The 19th-century **Udai Vilas Palace** beside a lake, is built of local grey-green granite in a blend of Rajput and Mughal styles. Rising from the centre of its courtyard is a fantastic four-storeyed pavilion with cusped arches, densely carved friezes, and a profusion of canopies and balconies. The large room on its top storey is inlaid with a variety of semi-precious stones.

Chittorgarh ㉕

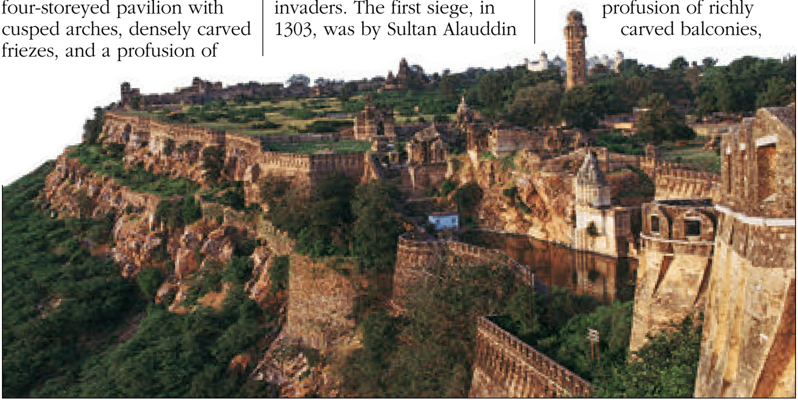
Chittorgarh district. 115 km (72 miles) NE of Udaipur. 🚆 🚌 ℹ *Janta Avas Graha, Station Rd, (01472) 24 1089.* 🎪 *Meera Utsav (Oct).*

The great, battle-scarred Chittorgarh Fort epitomizes in its tragic history the valour, romance, chivalry and strict death-before-dishonour code glorified in Rajput myths and legends. Sprawling across 280 ha (692 acres), atop a steep 180-m (591-ft) high rocky hill, Chittorgarh's ruined palaces, temples and towers bear witness to its illustrious and turbulent past, when it was the capital of the Sisodia rulers of Mewar, between the 12th and 16th centuries.

As Rajasthan's mightiest fort, it was the target of successive invaders. The first siege, in 1303, was by Sultan Alauddin Khilji *(see p48)*, whose goal was to capture not only the fort but also the queen, Rani Padmini, whose legendary beauty the sultan had glimpsed reflected in a mirror. When defeat seemed inevitable, Rani Padmini along with 13,000 women committed *jauhar* – a ritual form of mass suicide by immolation, practised by Rajput women to escape dishonour at the hands of their enemies. It is said that 50,000 Rajput warriors died in the ensuing battle. Alauddin's army then proceeded to sack the fort and destroyed many of its buildings. Within a few years, however, the ruler's grandson had regained it for the Sisodia dynasty.

The next great battle, this time against Sultan Bahadur Shah of Gujarat in 1535, saw the Queen Mother, Rani Jawaharbai, lead a cavalry charge and die on the battle-field along with the flower of Rajput youth. Once again, thousands of women inside the fort committed *jauhar*. The third and final assault on Chittorgarh was led by the Mughal emperor Akbar, who was able to capture it in 1567. Chittorgarh was abandoned thereafter, and the Sisodias moved their capital to Udaipur *(see pp398–9)*.

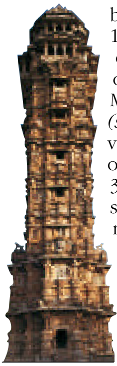
Seven massive spiked gates lead to the fort. The first building to the right is **Rana Kumbha's Palace** (built between 1433 and 1468), probably the earliest surviving example of a Rajput palace. Its northern side has a profusion of richly carved balconies,



A view of the impressive Chittorgarh Fort, spread over a rocky hill

and a unique stepped wall. Elephant stables and a council chamber comprise its public areas, while the private apartments are a maze of small rooms, including a zenana section. Near it are the 20th-century **Fateh Prakash Palace**, which now houses a museum of sculpture found on the site; the **Kumbha Shyam Temple**, dating to the 15th-century, with a fine sculpture of Vishnu in his Varaha (boar) incarnation; and the **Meerabai Temple**, built in 1440 by Meerabai, *(see p49)* another remarkable Mewar queen. A mystic and a poetess, she defied Rajput convention and devoted her life to the worship of Lord Krishna.

The main street runs south of this temple towards the nine-storeyed **Vijay Stambh** ("Victory Tower"), built by Maharana Kumbha between 1458 and 1468, to commemorate his victory over Sultan Mahmud of Malwa *(see p247)*. The view from the top of this extraordinary 36-m (118-ft) high sandstone structure, richly carved with gods and goddesses, is magnificent. The main street continues further south past noblemen's mansions to the **Gaumukh Reservoir**, fed by an underground spring, and the 16th-century **Kalika Mata Temple**, built over the original Sun Temple which was destroyed during the devastating siege of 1303.


Vijay Stambh

Opposite this temple stands the 19th-century reconstruction of **Padmini's Palace** with a lake pavilion adjacent to it. The palace contains the mirror in which Alauddin Khilji supposedly saw her reflection. Standing further south, past some Jain temples, is the **Kirti Stambh**. This seven-storeyed tower is dedicated to the first Jain *tirthankara,* Adinath.

🏛 Fateh Prakash Museum
◯ *Sat–Thu.* 🎫 *free on Mon.*

The 11th-century temple of the Sun God, in Jhalrapatan

Jhalawar ㉖

Jhalawar district. 323 km (201 miles) S of Jaipur. 👥 *48,100.* 🚌 ℹ *Hotel Chandrawati, (07432) 23 0081.* 🎪 *Chandrabhaga Cattle Fair (Oct/Nov).*

This delightful little town, surrounded by orange groves and poppy fields, is dominated by a 19th-century fort, the seat of the erstwhile princes of Jhalawar. It now houses government offices. An incongruous yet charming part of the fort is the **Bhavani Natya Shala Theatre** (built in 1921), which was modelled on the grand opera houses the maharaja had seen on his European tours. The old walled town of **Jhalrapatan** ("City of Bells"), 6 km (4 miles) south of the fort, has a splendid cluster of 11th-century temples. Of these the most impressive is the **Surya Temple** with its stunning image of the Sun God. About 1.5 km (1 mile) south of this temple, on the banks of the Chandrabhaga river, stands the superbly carved 7th-century **Chandra Mauleshwar Temple**.

Environs

The 14th-century **Ghagron Fort**, 10 km (6 miles) west of Jhalawar, is situated amid a landscape of hills, woods and fields, and surrounded on three sides by the Kali, Sindh and Ahu rivers.

The lush forests, cliffs and grasslands of **Darrah Wildlife Sanctuary**, 70 km (44 miles) west of Jhalawar, look just as they do in the famous Kota paintings *(see p405)* of hunting scenes – only the tigers and princes are now missing.

Kota ㉗

Kota district. 261 km (162 miles) S of Jaipur. 👥 *696,000.* 🚆 🚌
ℹ *Hotel Chambal, (0744) 232 7695.*
⊖ 🎪 *Dussehra Mela (Sep/Oct).*

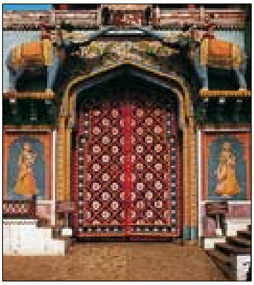
The imposing façade of Kota's fortified **City Palace**, which dates back to 1625, stretches along the banks of the Chambal river, recalling the princely past of this now heavily industrialized city. Kota's artistic heritage is well-represented in the palace apartments – every available surface is covered with miniature paintings, mirrorwork, murals and mosaics. Particularly resplendent is the Durbar Hall, with its ebony-and-ivory doors, and paintings depicting Kota's history. Many of the royal apartments now form part of the excellent **Rao Madho Singh Museum**, which has a fine collection of weapons and royal regalia.

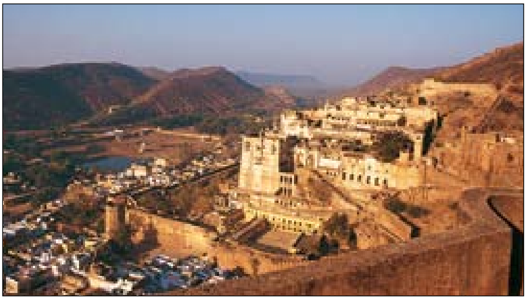
On Kishorsagar Lake, in the middle of the town, is the charming island palace known as **Jag Mandir** *(see front cover)*, built in the 18th century by a Kota queen who yearned for her childhood home in Udaipur *(see p398)*.

🏛 Rao Madho Singh Museum
◯ *Sat–Thu.* 🎫

Environs

Bardoli, 55 km (34 miles) southwest of Kota, has one of Rajasthan's most beautiful temple complexes. The 9th-century Ghateshwar Mahadev temple has an outstanding sculpture of Nataraja (the dancing Shiva) on the door of its sanctum.


Ebony-and-ivory door in the 17th-century City Palace, Kota



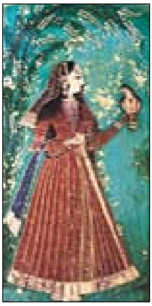
View of Bundi, nestled in a narrow valley of the Aravalli Hills

Bundi ㉘

Bundi district. 215 km (134 miles) S of Jaipur. 👥 *88,350.* 🚉 🚌
ℹ *Rajasthan Tourism, Circuit House, (0747) 244 3697.* ⏏ *daily.*
🎭 *Gangaur (Mar/Apr).*

Bundi is often described as the undiscovered jewel of Rajasthan. Surrounded on three sides by the rugged, thickly forested Aravalli Hills, this walled town has retained much of its historic character. The **Taragarh Fort** crowns the crest of a steep hill overlooking the town, while the **Garh Palace** spills picturesquely down the hillside. This palace is Bundi's – and Rajasthan's – jewel. Lieutenant Colonel James Tod, (1782–1835), the British Political Agent and author of the authoritative *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, wrote that "the *coup d'oeil* of the castellated palace of Boondi, from whichever side you approach it, is the most striking in India".

The state of Bundi was founded in 1341 by Rao Deva of the "fire-born" Hada Chauhan Rajput clan, and the massive, square Taragarh Fort dates to his reign. Work on the palace began in the 16th century, and it was added to by successive rulers over the next 200 years, at different levels on the hillside. Unlike most other palaces in Rajasthan, there is very little Mughal influence in its architecture.



Painting from the Chitrashala

The Garh Palace represents a rare example of the pure Rajput style, with curved roofs topping pavilions and kiosks, a profusion of temple columns and ornamental brackets, and typically Rajput motifs such as elephants and lotus flowers. Unusually, the palace is not built of the sandstone favoured by most other Rajput kingdoms, but of a hard, green-tinged serpentine stone, quarried locally. This stone, unlike sandstone, does not lend itself to fine carving. Instead, Garh Palace was embellished by superb paintings. The palace is entered through the imposing **Hathia Pol** ("Elephant Gateway"), flanked by two towers and topped by a pair of huge painted elephants. The most spectacular parts of the palace are the **Chattar Mahal** (built in 1660), and the **Chitrashala**, an arcaded gallery (built between 1748 and 1770) overlooking a hanging garden. The murals in these are regarded as among the finest examples of Rajput painting. The themes they cover include scenes from religious ceremonies, hunting scenes and other princely amusements. The colours are predominantly blue and green, with touches of deep red and yellow. In the middle of the town is the **Naval Sagar Lake**, with a little temple on an island in its centre. The fort and palace reflected in the lake make a pretty sight.

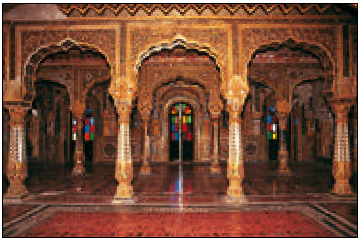
Bundi has over 50 stepwells, of which the most beautiful is the 46-m (151-ft) deep **Rani-ki-Baori**, also in the centre of town. Built in the 17th century, it is strikingly similar to Adalaj Vav in Gujarat *(see pp414–15)*, with richly decorated archways and sculptures of Vishnu's ten avatars *(see p679)*.

Situated at the northern edge of the town is the 18th-century **Sukh Niwas Mahal**, a romantic summer palace overlooking **Jait Sagar Lake**. Standing at the opposite end of the lake are the royal cenotaphs, and at its western edge is an elegant hunting tower, the **Shikar Burj**.

Environs

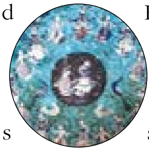
Bijolia, 50 km (31 miles) southwest of Bundi, on the road to Chittorgarh, has a group of three beautiful 13th-century temples, dedicated to Shiva. **Menal**, lying 20 km (12 miles) further along the same road is a delightful wooded spot with 11th-century temples standing near a gorge.

Tonk, 113 km (70 miles) north of Bundi, was once the capital of the only Muslim princely state in Rajasthan. Founded in the early 19th-century, its main attraction is the splendid Sunehri Kothi ("Golden Mansion") within the palace complex, every inch of its interior covered with gold leaf, lacquerwork, moulded stucco and striking mirrorwork. Stained-glass windows bathe this opulent hall in glowing colours. Tonk's Arabic and Persian Research Institute has rare, illuminated medieval Islamic manuscripts.

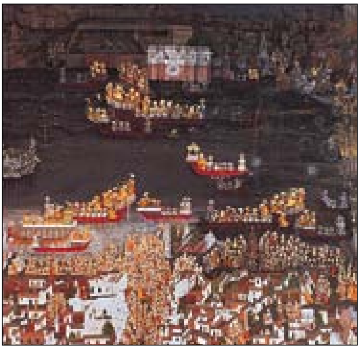


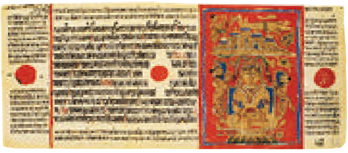
The gilded interior of Sunehri Kothi in Tonk

Rajasthani Miniature Painting


Radha and Krishna, Bundi

The intricate and vivid paintings of Rajasthan's princely states grew out of illustrated Jain and Hindu sacred texts. Originally, they depicted mainly religious themes, in bold lines and bright primary colours. After the 17th century, however, the influence of the more sophisticated Mughal-Persian art tradition brought greater delicacy of line, and a wider range of colours and themes into Rajasthani art. By the 18th century, many princely states such as Kishangarh, Mewar, Bundi and Kota had developed their own distinctive styles. In most schools of Rajasthani painting, however, human figures are shown in profile, and different colours, seasons, flowers and animals are used symbolically to express a variety of moods. These various schools of miniature painting continue to flourish in Rajasthan today.


The Maharana Celebrating Gangaur **(1715)**

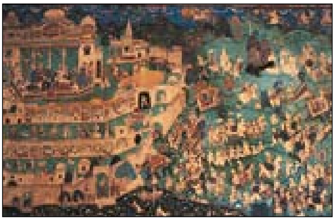

Jain religious text, early 17th century

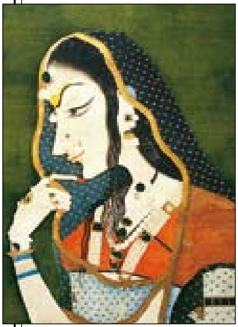
MEWAR PAINTINGS

Large, detailed compositions, showing scenes from the lives of the maharanas of Udaipur, are characteristic of the Mewar School. The paintings depict festivals, grand processions, historic battles and religious ceremonies. The intricate detail was achieved by using just a single squirrel hair as a brush.

BUNDI AND KOTA PAINTINGS

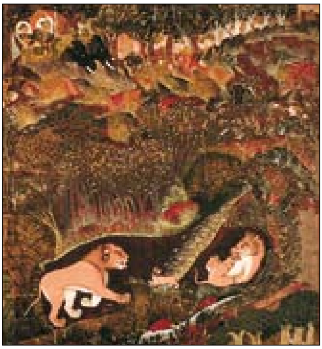
The neighbouring princely states of Bundi and Kota produced outstanding miniatures. Bundi specialized in depicting palace life and scenes from Krishna's life, executed in soft blues and greens. Kota is renowned for its superb hunting scenes, set in dramatic forested landscapes, with wonderful depictions of animals and foliage. An 18th-century court painter named Sheikh Taju created many of them.


Bundi miniature depicting a palace scene


Bani Thani Radha, often called the Indian Mona Lisa

KISHANGARH PAINTINGS

Famous for his fine portraits, the 18th-century Kishangarh artist, Nihal Chand, found a favourite model in the royal courtesan, Bani Thani Radha, with her elegantly elongated features and enigmatic expression. He was also known for his lyrical depictions of skyscapes and seasons.

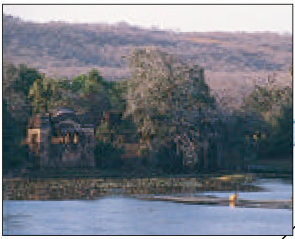

Maharao Durjan in the Kota Forest **(1730)**

Ranthambhore National Park ㉙

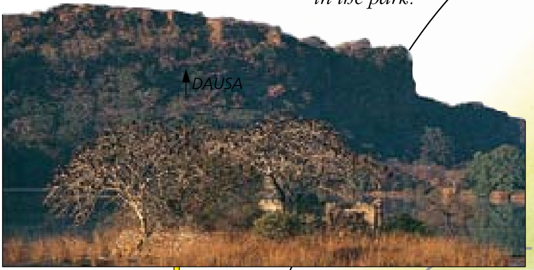
NATIONAL PARK
RANTHAMBHORE

Park sign

This park lies in the shadow of the Aravalli and Vindhya mountain ranges and covers a core area of 275 sq km (106 sq miles). Its razor-sharp ridges, deep boulder-filled gorges, lakes and jungles are the habitat of carnivores such as the caracal, panther, jackal and hyena, numerous species of deer, and a rich variety of resident and migratory birds. The most famous resident, however, is the endangered tiger, and it is a unique experience to catch glimpses of this majestic animal. Like other parks in the region, this was originally the hunting ground of Jaipur's maha-rajas and it only became a Project Tiger Reserve in 1973.

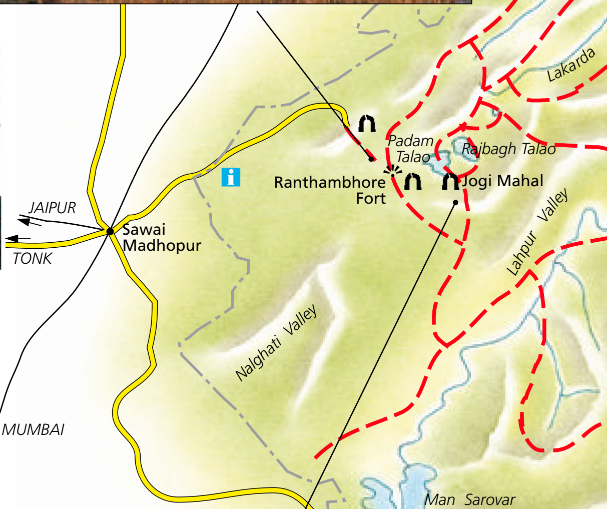


Rajbagh Talao
Ruined pavilions stand on the banks of Rajbagh Talao, one of the three lakes in the park.



Ranthambhore Fort
The park derives its name from this great Rajput forest fort that is 1,000 years old and stands at a height of 215 m (705 ft).

Sambar
Large herds of sambar (Cervus unicolor) *are seen around the lakes, wallowing in the water and feeding on aquatic plants, unperturbed by jeeps and visitors.*


DAUSA
JAIPUR
TONK
Sawai Madhopur
MUMBAI
Padam Talao
Rajbagh Talao
Lakarda
Ranthambhore Fort
Jogi Mahal
Lahpur Valley
Nalghati Valley
Man Sarovar
0 km
5
0 miles
2

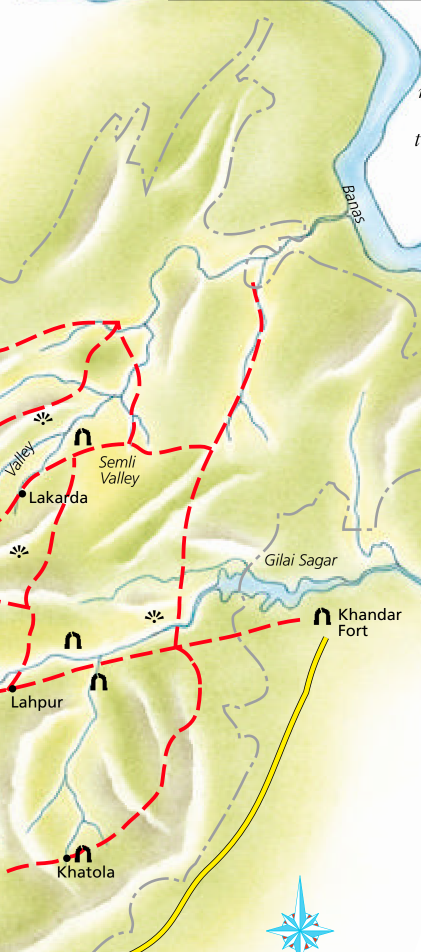
Banyan Tree
This enormous banyan tree (Ficus bengalensis) *lies in the grounds of Jogi Mahal. Its many spreading branches are all supported by roots.*

Tiger

Sighting the park's main predator is a matter of chance, but one can often find traces of its activities.

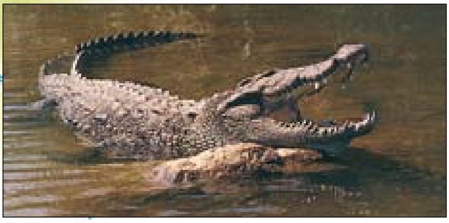
VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Sawai Madhopur district. 180 km (112 miles) SE of Jaipur. 🚆 *Sawai Madhopur, 10 km (6 miles) E of entry point, then taxi.* 🚌 *Sawai Madhopur.* ℹ *RTDC Hotel Vinayak, Sawai Madhopur, (07 462) 221 333.* ○ *Oct–Jun.* 🎟 📷 *extra charges.* ✋ *compulsory. Walking is strictly prohibited. Only jeeps hired from the Project Tiger Office, (07462) 220 223, near the railway station, are allowed inside the park.* 🛍 *The Dastkari Kendra, (07462) 222 892, opp Kutalpura village on the way to Kundera.*


DELHI
Banas
Valley
Semli Valley
Lakarda
Gilai Sagar
Khandar Fort
Lahpur
Khatola
KEY
Major road
Railway
Park border
Viewpoint
Trails
Archaeological site
Tourist information

Indian Roller Bird

This is one of the many species of birds found in the park. The others include birds of prey such as the crested serpent eagle and Bonelli's eagle, and many species of pigeons, flycatchers, storks and water birds.



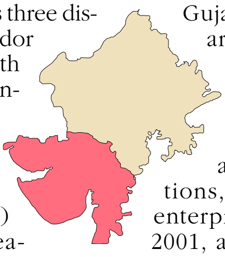
Marsh Crocodile

Muggers, or marsh crocodiles, are commonly seen submerged in water or basking on the shores of the lakes. Ungulate species are their main prey, and sometimes a crocodile can be glimpsed dragging the carcass of a deer into the water. Monitor lizards and pythons are some of the other reptiles found in the park.

Sloth Bear

This shaggy bear with short hind legs and a long muzzle emerges at dusk to feed. During the day it shelters in the rocky outcrops and is difficult to sight.

GUJARAT



The state of Gujarat has three distinct regions – a corridor running north to south which is the industrial mainland, a peninsula known as Saurashtra, and Kutch, which is partly desert and partly marshland. The state's 1,600-km (994-mile) coastline has attracted seafarers through the ages, lured by the rich prospects of trade. The Arabs, Portuguese, Dutch, Mughals and British, as well as Parsis fleeing their native Iran, have all left their mark on Gujarat's culture. Fascinating archaeological sites, superb Jain, Hindu and Islamic architecture, exquisite crafts and rare wildlife, including the Asiatic lion, are among Gujarat's attractions, as are its hardworking, enterprising people. In January 2001, an earthquake hit Gujarat and devastated the region of Kutch. But with their legendary capacity to overcome hardship and disaster, the people lost no time in rebuilding their lives out of the debris around them.

SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

Towns & Cities

- Ahmedabad ①
- Bhavnagar ⑫
- Bhuj ㉒
- Daman ⑪
- Diu ⑭
- Jamnagar ⑳
- Junagadh ⑰
- Mandvi ㉓
- Patan ⑥
- Porbandar ⑱
- Rajkot ㉑
- Siddhpur ⑦
- Surat ⑩
- Vadodara ⑧

Historic Sites

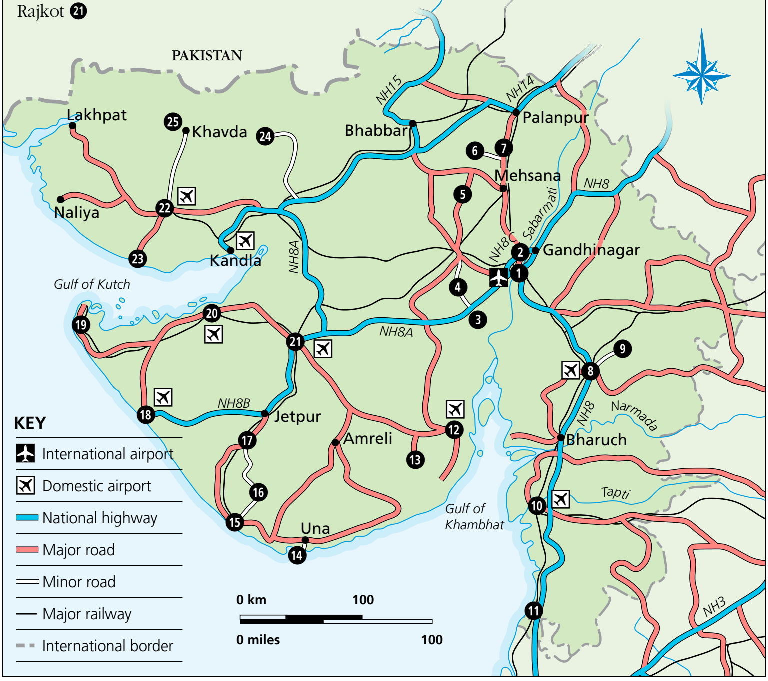
- Adalaj Vav ②
- Champaner ⑨
- Dholavira ㉔
- Lothal ③
- Modhera Sun Temple ⑤

Temples & Holy Places

- Dwarka ⑲
- Palitana ⑬
- Somnath ⑮

National Parks & Areas of Natural Beauty

- The Little Rann of Kutch Sanctuary ㉕
- Nal Sarovar Sanctuary ④
- Sasan Gir National Park ⑯


PAKISTAN
Lakhpat
㉕
Khavda
㉔
NH15
Bhabbar
NH14
Palanpur
⑥
⑦
Mehsana
⑤
NH8
Sabarmati
Naliya
㉒
㉓
Kandla
NH8A
NH8
②
Gandhinagar
①
④
③
Gulf of Kutch
⑳
⑲
㉑
NH8A
⑨
⑧
⑱
NH8B
Jetpur
⑰
Amreli
⑫
⑬
NH8
Narmada
Bharuch
⑯
⑮
Una
⑭
Gulf of Khambhat
⑩
Tapti
⑪
NH3
KEY
International airport
Domestic airport
National highway
Major road
Minor road
Major railway
International border
0 km
100
0 miles
100

◁ **Kutchi woman from the Meghwal tribe, in embroidered mirrorwork garments and heavy silver jewellery**

Ahmedabad ❶

Gujarat's leading city, Ahmedabad was the state capital until 1970. This bustling industrial and commercial centre also has a fascinating old quarter, redolent with Gujarat's traditional culture and history. Legend has it that the city owes its foundation to Sultan Ahmed Shah (r.1411–42), who, while out hunting, encountered a warren of rabbits on the banks of the Sabarmati river. Astonishingly, the rabbits turned fiercely on his hounds and defended their territory. Viewing this as an auspicious sign, the sultan built his new capital at this site and named it after himself – Ahmedabad.

A view of the crowded banks of the Sabarmati river

The Old City

Bounded by Lady Vidyagauri Rd, Sardar Patel Rd & Kasturba Gandhi Rd. **Heritage Walking Tours *Tel*** *(079) 2657 4335.*

A maze of crowded bazaars, *pols* (large gateways, leading to residential quarters), exquisitely carved façades, temples, mosques and subterranean stepwells *(vavs)* mark the 3-km (2-mile) square that makes up the Old City. This area is best explored on foot, and the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation organizes a daily Heritage Walking Tour through the atmospheric bylanes.

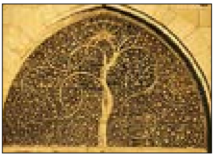
Built at the site of the original city, **Bhadra Fort** has panoramic views of the surrounding streets. Southwest of the fort is **Ahmed Shah's Mosque**, a simple place of worship, built in 1414 on the site of an early 13th-century Hindu temple.

Perhaps Ahmedabad's most photographed monument, **Siddi Saiyad's Mosque** in the northeast corner of Bhadra Fort, is renowned for its superb yellow stone latticework. Made by a slave of Ahmed Shah in 1572, the twin *jalis* on the western wall depict the intertwining branches of a tree, carved with extraordinary delicacy.

Southeast of the fort, the **Teen Darwaza** ("Triple Gateway") straddles the road, which is lined with shops selling block-prints, silverware and assorted bric-à-brac. Close by, along Mahatma Gandhi Road, is the **Jami Masjid**, which Sultan Ahmed Shah built in 1423, to enable the faithful to congregate for Friday prayers. The masons who constructed this yellow sandstone structure, ingeniously used pieces retrieved from demolished Hindu and Jain temples – the black slab close to the main arch is said to be the base of an inverted Jain idol. The mosque's 15 domes are supported by 260 pillars covered with intricate carvings. The interior is illuminated by natural light filtered through latticework screens.

Outside the east entrance of the Jami Masjid, close to the jewellery bazaar in Manek Chowk, is the **Tomb of Ahmed Shah**, with elegant pillared verandahs, where the sultan, his son and grandson are buried. In the heart of the market, echoing the plan and layout of the sultan's tomb, lies **Rani-ka-Hazira**, the mausoleum of his many queens.

To the southeast of Manek Chowk is **Rani Sipri's Mosque**, also known as Masjid-e-Nagina ("Jewel of a Mosque") because of its elegant proportions and slender minarets. Northwest of Manek Chowk is **Rani Rupmati's Mosque**, dedicated to the sultan's Hindu wife. Built in the mid-15th century, the mosque incorporates elements of Hindu and Islamic design, with perforated stone screens to provide privacy for women. The city's famous Shaking Minarets, which are located next to the railway station, are closed to visitors.



Tree of Life *jali* in Siddi Saiyad's Mosque

Traffic moving through the Teen Darwaza thoroughfare

Outside the Old City

N of the Old City.

Situated outside the Delhi Gate, the **Hatheesing Temple** was built in 1850 by Huthising Kesarising, a Jain merchant. This intricately carved marble temple is dedicated to Dharmanath, the 15th Jain *tirthankara*. A paved courtyard has 52 cubicles, housing shrines dedicated to different *tirthankaras*.

A fine example of Gujarat's stepwells is the **Dada Harir Vav** lying to the northeast of the old city. Built in 1500 for Bai Harir Sultani, a lady from the sultan's harem, its walls and pillars are beautifully decorated with elaborate carvings.

New Ahmedabad

W of Sabarmati river.

Across the Sabarmati river, modern Ahmedabad has some fine examples of contemporary architecture designed by Le Corbusier *(see p93)* and the American architect, Louis Kahn. The **Sanskar Kendra**, designed by Le Corbusier, has a rare collection of miniature paintings. The Indian Institute of Management (IIM), India's top college for business studies, is in a campus designed by Louis Kahn. Close by, the **LD Institute of Indology** houses ancient manuscripts and paintings, and the **Calico Museum** *(see pp338–9)* displays an outstanding collection of textiles. The prestigious National Institute of Design is on the south bank of the river.

Sabarmati Ashram

○ *8:30am–7pm daily.*

● *mid-Jun–mid-Oct.*

A spartan colony of tiled houses, the **Sabarmati Ashram** was a second home to Mahatma Gandhi. It was from here that he orchestrated the final struggle for India's freedom. His cottage, Hriday Kunj, has been maintained much as he left it, and contains some personal items such as his round eyeglasses, wooden slippers, books and letters.

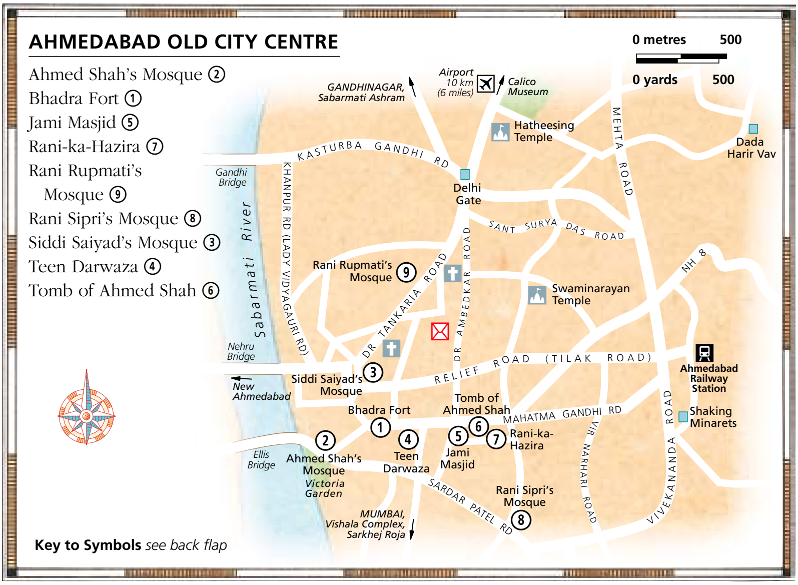
Gandhi's room in the Sabarmati Ashram, with his spinning wheel

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Ahmedabad district. 545 km (338 miles) NW of Mumbai. *3,515,400.* ✈ *10 km (6 miles) N of city centre.* ℹ *HK House, Ashram Rd, (079) 2657 8046.* *Mon–Sat.* *Uttarayan (14 Jan), Navratri (Sep/Oct).*

Environs

About 4 km (2.5 miles) south of the city is the **Vishala Complex** with a museum displaying traditional utensils. It also has an excellent outdoor restaurant for Gujarati cuisine, set in an attractive rural ambience *(see p611)*. A short distance to the southwest is the **Sarkhej Roja**, a beautiful complex of tombs and pavilions around an artificial lake, built as a retreat for Gujarat's rulers between 1445 and 1461. Its tombs include that of Ahmed Shah's spiritual advisor, Sheikh Ahmed Khattu. Finely carved brass latticework is a unique feature of this site. Built in the late 1960s, the state capital, **Gandhinagar**, is 25 km (16 miles) north of Ahmedabad. Spread over 60 sq km (23 sq miles), this planned township has the state's administrative complex at its centre.



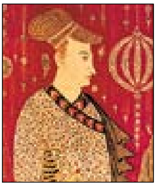
AHMEDABAD OLD CITY CENTRE

Ahmed Shah's Mosque ②
Bhadra Fort ①
Jami Masjid ⑤
Rani-ka-Hazira ⑦
Rani Rupmati's Mosque ⑨
Rani Sipri's Mosque ⑧
Siddi Saiyad's Mosque ③
Teen Darwaza ④
Tomb of Ahmed Shah ⑥

Key to Symbols *see back flap*

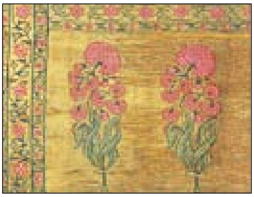
0 metres 500
0 yards 500
GANDHINAGAR, Sabarmati Ashram
Airport 10 km (6 miles)
Calico Museum
Hatheesing Temple
MEHTA ROAD
Dada Harir Vav
KASTURBA GANDHI RD
Gandhi Bridge
Delhi Gate
KHANPUR RD (LADY VIDYAGAURI RD)
Sabarmati River
SANT SURYA DAS ROAD
DR AMBEDKAR ROAD
NH 8
Rani Rupmati's Mosque ⑨
DR TANKARIA ROAD
Swaminarayan Temple
Nehru Bridge
RELIEF ROAD (TILAK ROAD)
Ahmedabad Railway Station
Siddi Saiyad's Mosque ③
New Ahmedabad
Tomb of Ahmed Shah
Bhadra Fort ①
MAHATMA GANDHI RD
Shaking Minarets
② ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦
Rani-ka-Hazira
Ellis Bridge
Ahmed Shah's Mosque
Teen Darwaza
Jami Masjid
Victoria Garden
SARDAR PATEL RD
VIR NARHARI ROAD
VIVEKANANDA ROAD
Rani Sipri's Mosque ⑧
MUMBAI, Vishala Complex, Sarkhej Roja

Ahmedabad: The Calico Museum

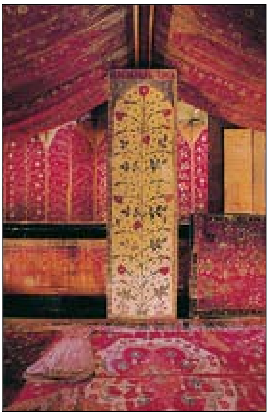


Detail from *kalamkari* fabric

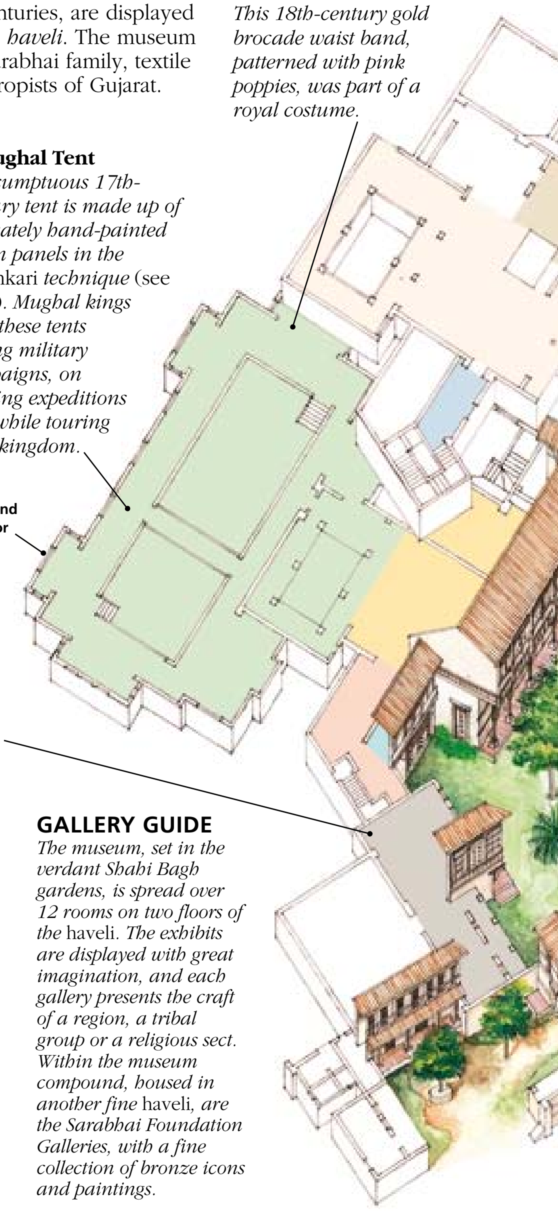
A major centre of India's textile trade and industry since the 15th century, Ahmedabad is an appropriate location for this outstanding museum. Its collection of rare textiles includes royal tents, carpets and costumes; religious paintings on cloth; embroideries, brocades and silk weaves; and Kashmir shawls. The exhibits, most of which date to the 17th and 18th centuries, are displayed in a beautiful old *haveli*. The museum was established in 1949 by the Sarabhai family, textile mill owners and leading philanthropists of Gujarat.



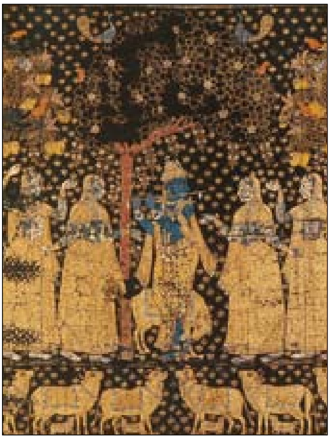
Brocade Patka
This 18th-century gold brocade waist band, patterned with pink poppies, was part of a royal costume.



★ Mughal Tent
This sumptuous 17th-century tent is made up of intricately hand-painted cotton panels in the kalamkari *technique* (see p680). *Mughal kings used these tents during military campaigns, on hunting expeditions and while touring their kingdom.*



GALLERY GUIDE
The museum, set in the verdant Shahi Bagh gardens, is spread over 12 rooms on two floors of the haveli. *The exhibits are displayed with great imagination, and each gallery presents the craft of a region, a tribal group or a religious sect. Within the museum compound, housed in another fine* haveli, *are the Sarabhai Foundation Galleries, with a fine collection of bronze icons and paintings.*

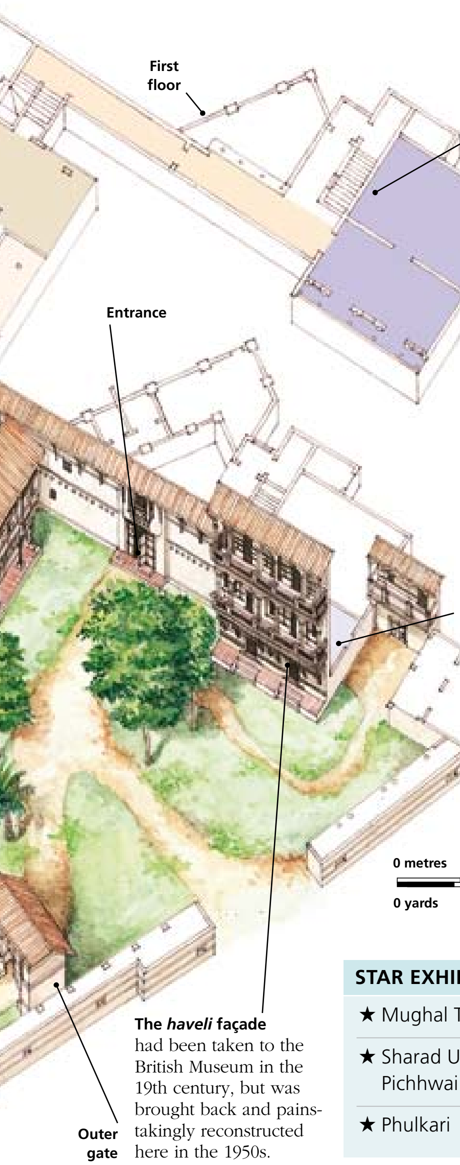


★ Sharad Utsav Pichhwai
Lord Krishna plays the flute in this exquisite 18th-century pichhwai *from Nathdwara* (see p399). *It was hung in the temple on the autumn full moon, when nectar is believed to fall from heaven. Note the delightful cow licking Krishna's leg.*

A view of the Calico Museum, showing the richly carved wooden façade of the old *haveli* in which it is housed

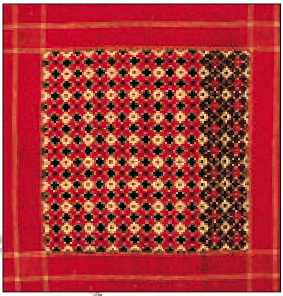
VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Sarabhai Foundation, Shahi Bagh, N of Delhi Gate.
Tel *(079) 2286 8172.*
○ *Thu–Tue.* ● *public hols.*
⊘ ☑ *10am–12:30pm, 2:30–5:30pm. Garden tour by appointment only.* 🛍 🚻
Sarabhai Foundation Galleries
○ *Thu–Tue.* ● *public hols.*



The *haveli* façade had been taken to the British Museum in the 19th century, but was brought back and painstakingly reconstructed here in the 1950s.

★ Phulkari
Elaborately embroidered with cotton thread and floss silk, this 19th-century piece from Punjab was part of a bride's dowry.



Telia Rumal
This cotton kerchief from Andhra Pradesh is made by a unique technique, where the yarn is oiled before being dyed and woven.

STAR EXHIBITS

- ★ Mughal Tent
- ★ Sharad Utsav Pichhwai
- ★ Phulkari

KEY

- 🟨 Export textile galleries
- 🟩 Court textiles
- 🟧 Gallery of shawls
- 🟦 Mughal costumes
- ⬜ Jain and Vaishnav textiles
- 🟦 Kutch and Sindh embroidery
- ⬜ Kathiawar embroidery
- 🟨 Textiles of Orissa
- 🟨 Madhubani quilts
- 🟪 Phulkari from Punjab, Kantha from Bengal
- ⬜ Tie-and-dye gallery

Adalaj Vav ❷

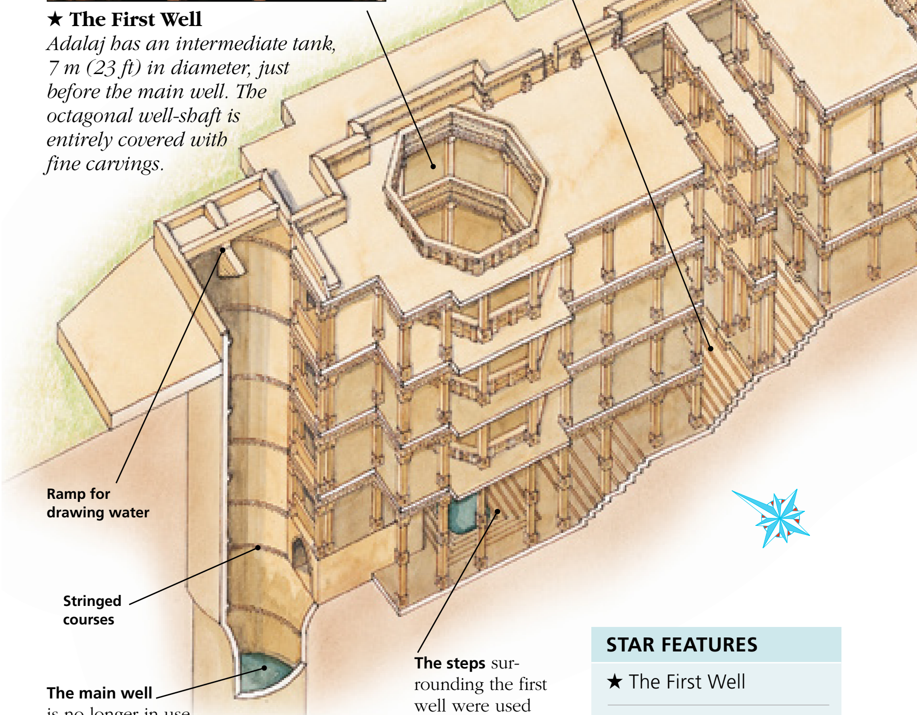
Detail of carving on a wall niche

The stepwells *(vavs)* of Gujarat are an ingenious answer to the water scarcity in this arid region. Many of these elaborately ornamented, underground wells are dedicated to deities, acknowledging the hand of God in providing life-sustaining water. Adalaj Vav, perhaps Gujarat's finest stepwell, was built in 1499 by Rudabai, the wife of a local chieftain, to conserve water and provide a cool and pleasant ambience for social interaction. A series of beautiful platforms and galleries are built into the sides of the stepwell, all the way down to its subterranean depths.

Local women at the stepwell, which is still used for rest and recreation

The Stepped Corridor
The main corridor leads down five storeys to a depth of 30 m (98 ft), through pavilions whose walls, pillars and niches are covered with sculptures.

★ The First Well
Adalaj has an intermediate tank, 7 m (23 ft) in diameter, just before the main well. The octagonal well-shaft is entirely covered with fine carvings.



Ramp for drawing water

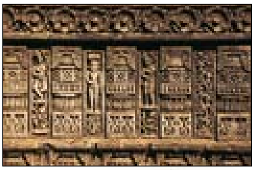
Stringed courses

The main well is no longer in use, but the ramp at the top, used for drawing water, still exists.

The steps surrounding the first well were used by people taking ritual baths.

STAR FEATURES

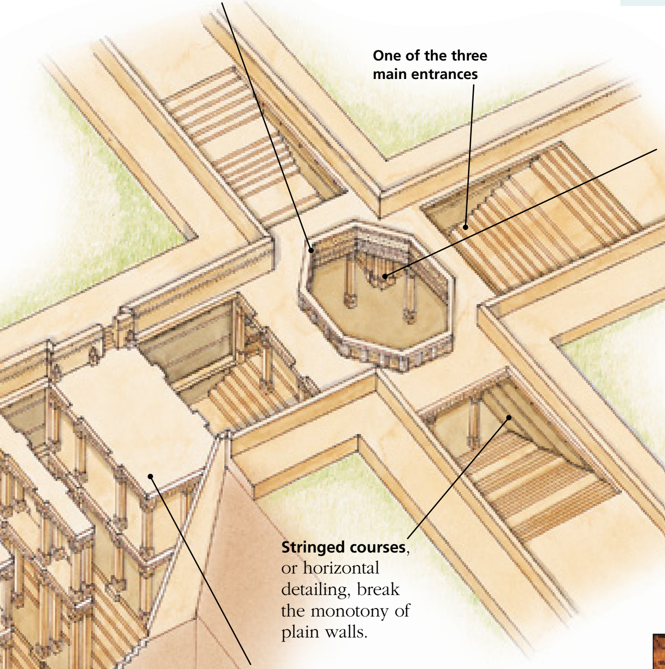
- ★ The First Well
- ★ The First Landing
- ★ Wall Niches



Ornamental Detail
The well-shafts are profusely carved with intricate floral and geometric motifs, interspersed with figurines.

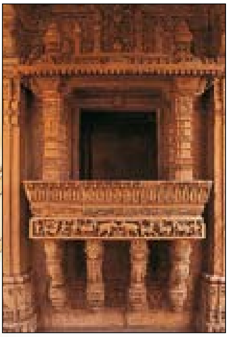
VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Gandhinagar district. 17 km (11 miles) N of Ahmedabad. 🚌 *Taxis and autos are the best options from Ahmedabad.* ○ *daily.* 📷 *flash photography is prohibited.*



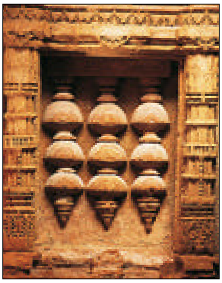
One of the three main entrances

Stringed courses, or horizontal detailing, break the monotony of plain walls.



★ The First Landing
Balconies, windows, doors and shrines line the first landing – a large underground platform. Adalaj is best viewed at noon, when sunlight filters down to the bottom.

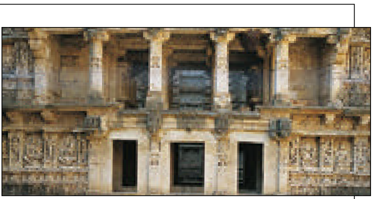
The Pavilions
The pavilions, supported by rows of carved pillars, are flooded with diffused light and provide ideal resting places.



★ Wall Niches
Niches feature in all the pavilions, carved with motifs of pots, horses, flowers and leaves.

OTHER STEPWELLS IN GUJARAT

The 11th-century **Rani ni Vav** in Patan *(see p417)* is among the most elaborately carved stepwells, with some 800 sculptures. Built in 1499, **Dada Harir Vav** *(see p411)* in Ahmedabad, is one of the finest examples of a *vav* from the Muslim period in Gujarat. The 15th-century **Ambarpur Vav**, 18 km (11 miles) from Ahmedabad, is one of the few *vavs* still in use.



Rani ni Vav in Patan, one of India's largest *vavs*

The dry dock at Lothal, dating to 2500 BC

Lothal ❸

Ahmedabad district. 75 km (47 miles) SW of Ahmedabad. 🚉 *Lothal–Burkhi station, 6 km (4 miles) SW of Lothal, then local transport.* 🚌 *to Burkhi.* ○ *Sat–Thu.* 🎟 📷

Excavations at Lothal have unearthed the remains of a remarkable city of the Indus Valley Civilization *(see p41)* that existed 4,500 years ago. Located 6 km (4 miles) northwest of the confluence of the Sabarmati and Bhogavo rivers, Lothal (literally, "Mound of the Dead") had a navigable estuary to the sea through the Gulf of Cambay (now Gulf of Khambat), which made it a flourishing port that once traded with Egypt, Persia and Mesopotamia.

The site reveals the foundations of a well-planned city with blocks of houses, paved drains, channels and wells, and 12 public baths. Other finds include beautifully made beads and pottery decorated with bird and animal motifs. Seals with intriguing, pictographic writing (as yet undeciphered), and weights and measures were also found here. The city was surrounded by a mud brick embankment, to protect it from the perennial floods which, in all probability, caused the city's destruction around 1,900 BC.

Among the prize exhibits in the **Archaeological Museum** are a copper figurine and a gold-bead necklace.

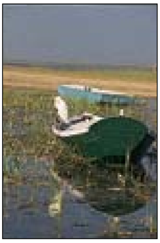
In 2001, Indian oceanographers carrying out water pollution tests in the Gulf of Cambay nearby, made an astonishing discovery. They found the foundations of two cities under the sea, complete with streets, houses, staircases and temples. Objects recovered from the seabed, such as a stone slab covered with mysterious markings (which could be the earliest form of writing yet discovered), and carved wooden logs, have been carbon-dated to 7500 BC. The discovery of this site, which has been dubbed "Asia's Atlantis", has excited historians and archaeologists all over the world, as it suggests that civilization may have started 5,000 years earlier than previously believed. They surmise that the city may have been submerged as sea levels rose at the end of the Ice Age in about 8000 BC.

🏛 **Archaeological Museum**
○ *Sat–Thu.* 🎟 📷

Nal Sarovar Sanctuary ❹

Ahmedabad district. 60 km (37 miles) SW of Ahmedabad. 🚉 *Viramgam, 35 km (22 miles) N of entry point, then taxi.* 🚌 *Viramgam.* ℹ *Conservator of Forests (Wildlife), Gandhinagar, (079) 952717–223 500.* 🎟 ♿ **permit** *needed from Forest Department to enter sanctuary.*

Nal Sarovar sanctuary is one of the largest bird sanctuaries in the country. The 115-sq km (44-sq mile) Nal Lake and the surrounding swamp forests are best visited between November and February, when they attract as many as 250 species of waterfowl, including flamingoes, geese, cranes, pelicans, storks, cormorants, ibis and spoonbills. Winter migrants from as far as Siberia, such as the elegant bluish-grey demoiselle crane, also congregate here in hundreds, and can be observed at fairly close quarters. A perennial resident is the Sarus crane, the largest species of crane in the world. Believed to pair for life, Sarus cranes enact a spectacular courtship ritual, performing a synchronized dance that involves bowing with outstretched wings. Unfortunately, pressures on the habitat from the resident fishing communities, and from growing numbers of tourists, are slowly depleting the Nal Lake's rich variety of birdlife.


Reed beds on Nal Lake

Graceful flamingoes, a regular sight at the Nal Sarovar Sanctuary

Exquisitely carved images of Hindu deities at Rani ni Vav, Patan

Modhera Sun Temple ❺

See pp418–19.

Patan ❻

Mehsana district. 140 km (87 miles) from Ahmedabad. 👥 *112,050.* 🚆 🚌 🎪 *Jatar Fair (Sep/Oct).*

The town of Patan was the capital of this region between the 8th and 15th centuries, before Sultan Ahmed Shah moved base to Ahmedabad *(see pp410–11)* in 1411. The ruins of the old capital, Anhilwada, lie 2 km (1.3 miles) northwest of Patan, and include an impressive stepwell, **Rani ni Vav**, and a water tank. The seven-storeyed stepwell ranks with Adalaj Vav *(see pp414–15)* as the finest in Gujarat. This splendid piece of architecture from the Solanki period (10th–14th centuries), now painstakingly restored, boasts some 800 individual, elaborately carved sculptures. Constructed in the 11th century by Queen Udaymati as a memorial to her husband, Bhimdeva, its unique feature is its direct as well as lateral series of steps leading to the water's edge. At the base are 37 niches, with the elephant god Ganesha carved into them. Nearby, the **Sahastralinga Talav**, a water tank with 1,000 shrines dedicated to the god Shiva, stands on the banks of the Saraswati river.

Patan also boasts more than 100 beautifully carved Jain temples, of which the **Panchasara Parsvanatha Temple** is the most striking. The town also has numerous traditional *havelis* with intricately carved façades.

Another attraction for many visitors is the beautiful *patola* sari. This lavish fabric is woven in Patan by a single family who have passed the craft down from one generation to the next. They are available locally and in major cities.

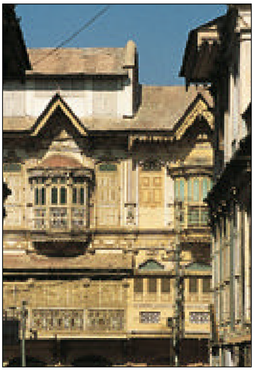
Siddhpur ❼

Mehsana district. 128 km (80 miles) N of Ahmedabad. 👥 *53,600.* 🚆 🚌

Lying along the Anjuni river, Siddhpur was once famous for the Rudra Mala Complex of Shiva temples, dating from the 10th century. It was later destroyed by Muslim invaders in the 13th century. Historical accounts describe a three-storeyed complex, profusely carved in stone and supported by 1,600 pillars, with 11 smaller shrines and three 40-m (131-ft) tall gateways. Two porches and four columns from the main shrine are all that remain today, together with a well-preserved, carved gateway with two high columns. An exploration of the town reveals interesting wooden *havelis* and pillared mansions, built by Muslim traders in the 19th century.

Environs

This region has the popular temple towns of **Ambaji**, 88 km (55 miles) north of Siddhpur, and **Bahucharaji**, 55 km (34 miles) southwest of Siddhpur. Both temples are dedicated to the goddess Amba (a reincarnation of Shiva's consort, Parvati) and they attract large crowds of devotees during the four main full-moon festivals each year in March, June, September and November. The pilgrims have their heads shaved *en masse* at both temples.



Traditional houses in Siddhpur with finely carved façades

PATOLA WEAVING

Detail of a typical *patola* sari

Patola is an intricate silk weaving technique practised in Patan. The warp and weft threads are coloured in parts by tie-dyeing, and then woven to form clear designs in a method called double ikat *(see p668)*. Typical motifs include jewels, flowers, animals and dancing women, interspersed with geometric forms. The craft is laborious – a month's work goes into weaving one sari length (5.5 m/6 yards) – and its product is highly prized, especially in a bridal trousseau. This exquisite fabric was exported to Indonesia where it became the cloth of the royal court.

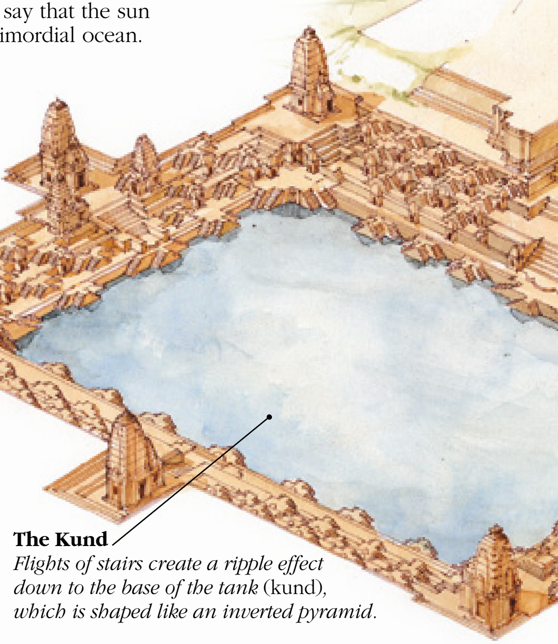
Modhera Sun Temple ❺

Surya, the Sun God

The Sun Temple at Modhera was built in 1026 by King Bhima I of the Solanki dynasty. It is so precisely laid out in an east-west direction that the sun's rays course through its chambers and strike the centre of the inner sanctum at high noon every day. The carvings, both inside and on the exterior, are extraordinarily detailed, depicting a pantheon of Hindu deities as well as scenes from everyday life. An impressive tank dominates the forecourt. The juxtaposition of a tank with a Sun Temple is inspired by Vedic scriptures, which say that the sun was born from the depths of a primordial ocean.

The Entrance Hall
This hall has 12 representations of Surya, that depict the phases of the sun in each month of the year.

Shrines
The tank is surrounded by miniature shrines, topped by curved shikharas.



The Kund
Flights of stairs create a ripple effect down to the base of the tank (kund), *which is shaped like an inverted pyramid.*

Vadodara ❽

Vadodara district. 113 km (70 miles) SE of Ahmedabad. 👥 *1,306,100.* ✈ *8 km (5 miles) NE of town centre.* 🚆 🚌 ℹ *Gujarat Tourism, (0265) 242 7489.* ✉ *Vadodara Municipal Corporation, (0265) 243 3116.*

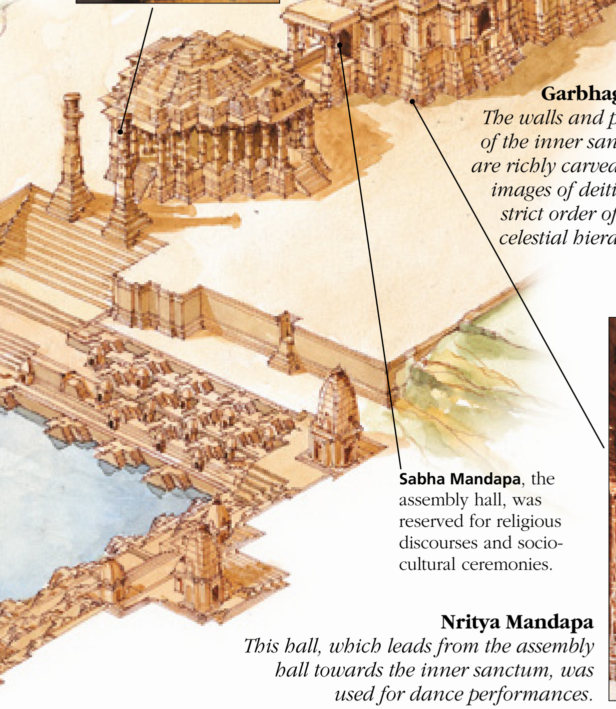
Situated on the banks of the Vishwamitri river, Vadodara owes much of its splendour to Sayajirao Gaekwad III (1875–1939), a former ruler who transformed his principality into a progressive centre of culture, education and industry. Today Vadodara, also known as Baroda, is a vibrant city with many interesting buildings, museums and parks. The **Laxmi Vilas Palace**, an Indo-Saracenic pile, was designed by the English architect, Major Charles Mant *(see p468)*. It took 12 years to build and was finally completed in 1890. It is still the residence of the erstwhile ruling family, though there are plans to convert parts of it into a luxury hotel. The **Maharaja Fateh Singh Museum**, within the palace grounds, has a rare

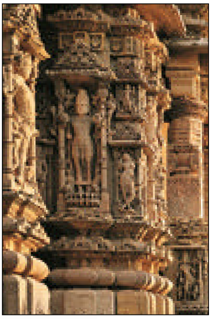
The magnificent façade of the Laxmi Vilas Palace

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Mehsana district. 119 km (74 miles) NW of Ahmedabad. 🚆 *Mehsana, 25 km (16 miles) away, then taxi or bus.* 🚌 ℹ *(02734) 28 4334.* ○ *daily.* 💰 👉 ☕
🎏 *Modhera Dance Festival (Jan).*

The Torana
All that survives of the torana *or arched gateway are these two intricately carved columns leading into the temple.*



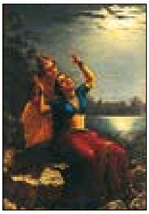


Garbhagriha
The walls and pillars of the inner sanctum are richly carved with images of deities, in strict order of their celestial hierarchy.

Sabha Mandapa, the assembly hall, was reserved for religious discourses and socio-cultural ceremonies.

Nritya Mandapa
This hall, which leads from the assembly hall towards the inner sanctum, was used for dance performances.

collection of paintings by the famous Indian artist, Raja Ravi Varma (1848–1906). **Sayaji Bagh**, a beautiful park in the heart of the city, houses a zoo, a planetarium and the **Vadodara Museum and Picture Gallery** which exhibits an eclectic collection of Mughal miniatures, European oil paintings and royal artifacts. Pride of place goes to its collection of 68 striking bronzes from Akota, a centre of Jain culture in the 5th century. Other notable sights are the **Kirti Mandir**, the *samadhi* (memorial) of Vadodara's royal family; and the **Nyaya Mandir**, an Indo-Saracenic building which is now a law court. The city also has the Maharaja Sayajirao University's **College of Fine Art**, an institute of national eminence.



***Radha and Madhava* by Raja Ravi Varma**

🏛 Laxmi Vilas Palace
Tel *(0265) 243 1819.* ○ *Tue–Sun. Visits by prior appointment only.* 💰

🏛 Maharaja Fateh Singh Museum
Tel *(0265) 242 6372.* ○ *Tue–Sun.* 💰

🏛 Vadodara Museum and Picture Gallery
Tel *(0265) 279 3801.* ○ *10:30am–5:30pm Tue–Sun.* 💰

Environs

The famous Amul Dairy is located in **Anand**, 38 km (24 miles) northwest of Vadodara. Synonymous with the "White Revolution" that made India self-sufficient in milk, it helped pioneer India's dairy cooperative movement, and now procures one million litres of milk every day from 1,000 milk cooperative societies. It is open daily to visitors from 3 to 5pm.

Jain Temple in Pavagadh Fort, near Champaner

Champaner ❾

Vadodara district. 52 km (32 miles) NE of Vadodara. 🚌 🎪 *Mahakali Festival (Mar/Apr).*

The deserted city of Champaner, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is situated at the foot of Pavagadh Hill. Originally the seat of a Rajput Chauhan dynasty, Champaner was conquered by the Muslim ruler Mahmud Begada in 1484. He spent 23 years rebuilding the citadel, adding mosques, palaces and tombs within its massive walls, guarded by huge gateways. Champaner remained the capital of Gujarat until 1535, when it was conquered by the Mughal emperor Humayun. Thereafter, it fell into gradual decline.

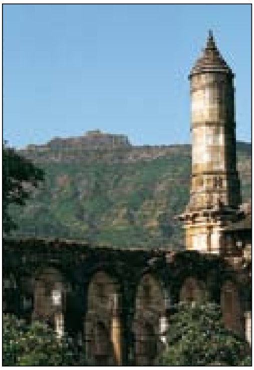
Much of Champaner lies in ruins today, with the remains of many old mosques and palaces reflecting a blend of Islamic and Jain traditions. The **Jami Masjid**, built in 1523, is a large, symmetrical structure with a perfectly proportioned dome. Its richly ornamented exterior with 172 pillars and 30-m (98-ft) high minarets, makes it one of the finest Islamic monuments in western India. Another elegant mosque here is the 16th-century **Nagina Masjid**.

The **Pavagadh Fort**, at the crest of the 820-m (2,690-ft) high Pavagadh Hill, is 4 km (2.5 miles) to the southwest of Champaner. It has a cluster of Muslim, Hindu and Jain shrines, and the ruins of an ancient fortification, reflecting its chequered past. On the way up the hill are the ruins of the **Sat Mahal**, the seven-storeyed palace of the Chauhan kings. The kings were slain when they refused to embrace Islam after the Muslim conquest, and their women and children committed *jauhar*. There are also two domed granaries, the Makai Kothar and the Naulakha Kothar.

Environs

Dabhoi Fort, 75 km (47 miles) south of Champaner, was constructed in the 13th century by the Solanki Rajputs (10th–14th centuries). It is an interesting example of Rajput military architecture, with four gates, a water tank fed by an aqueduct and fields within the fort to provide food during a siege.

Detail from the Jami Masjid



Ruins of the 16th-century Jami Masjid in Champaner

Surat ❿

Surat district. 234 km (145 miles) S of Ahmedabad. 👥 *2,433,800.* 🚆 🚌 ℹ *1/847 Athugar St, Nanpura, (0261) 247 8586.* 🧺 *Mon–Sat.*

Strategically located on the coast, Surat was once a prosperous port and many powers battled to control it between the 16th and 18th centuries. At various times the Portuguese, Dutch, Mughals, Marathas and British held sway here, but its importance began to wane after 1837, when it was ravaged by flood and fire. Many of Surat's Hindu and Parsi merchants *(see p447)* left for Bombay (Mumbai), which then gradually overtook Surat as the premier port on the western coast. Though no longer a port of any consequence, Surat is today a major industrial centre. The 16th-century **Surat Castle**, beside the Tapti Bridge, is the town's oldest structure. Built by Khudawan Khan, an Albanian Christian who embraced Islam, the castle has 12-m (39-ft) high battlements and 4-m (13-ft) thick walls. Iron strips were used to bind its various elements and all its joints were filled with molten lead, to make it as impenetrable as possible. Especially noteworthy is the imposing gateway in its eastern wing, with a menacingly spiked exterior, and a delicately carved interior. Sadly, sundry offices now housed within the castle have robbed it of its historic ambience.

Northeast of the castle, just beyond Kataragama Gate, are the English, Dutch and Armenian cemeteries, that bear witness to the city's cosmopolitan past. Though now overgrown, they are worth exploring for the intriguing personal histories recounted on the tombs' epitaphs. Particularly impressive is the mausoleum of Sir George Oxinden, a governor of the Surat Port, and his brother, in the British cemetery. The tomb of Baron

Adriaan van Reede, built in the 17th century, in the Dutch cemetery has an enormous double cupola.

Modern Surat is known for its flourishing textile industry which produces the famous *tanchoi* (brocade) silk. It also specializes in jewellery and is a major diamond-cutting centre for suppliers from all over the world. During the 1980s, the city had, unfortunately, become a byword for urban squalor, and in 1994 suffered an outbreak of plague. This galvanized the city's administration into a massive clean-up drive, which has resulted in the revival of Surat as a prosperous commercial centre.

Daman ⓫

Daman Union Territory. 390 km (242 miles) S of Ahmedabad. 👥 *35,750.* 🚆 *Vapi, 10 km (6 miles) SE of Daman, then taxi or bus.* 🚌 ℹ *Nani Daman, (0260) 225 5104.*

Tucked away in the southern tip of Gujarat, adjoining Maharashtra, is the tiny enclave of Daman which was a Portuguese colony until 1961. The Damanganga river, which flows into the Arabian Sea, divides the town into two distinct parts – Nani Daman (Little Daman) which is dotted with hotels and bars, and Moti Daman (Big Daman), the old Portuguese township.

Moti Daman is enclosed within the massive **Daman Fort**. Its ten bastions and two gateways date to 1559, and it is ringed by a moat linked to the river. Daman's well preserved churches include the large **Bom Jesus Cathedral**, built in 1603, which has a richly carved portal and an ornamental altar. The smaller **Rosario Chapel**, outside the fort walls, has exquisitely carved wooden panels, depicting scenes from the life of Jesus. The lighthouse, to the north of the fort, affords fine views of the Gulf of Cambay.

The gateway to St Jerome's Fort in Nani Daman

St Jerome's Fort, in Nani Daman, is less grand than Daman Fort but houses the lovely chapel of Our Lady of the Sea. The chapel has a delicate, classical façade of 12 columns crowned with a cross.

Liquor flows freely in Nani Daman's dingy bars, attracting crowds of tipplers from the rest of Gujarat where alcohol is prohibited. Those who want to take in local colour would be well advised to avoid the bars and explore the farmers' market or the riverside fish market instead.

The Devka and Jampore beaches, 5 km (3 miles) north and south of Daman respectively, are not spectacular, but offer tranquil retreats among casuarina groves.

View of the harbour below St Jerome's fort in Nani Daman, Daman

FESTIVALS OF GUJARAT

Uttarayan *(14 Jan).* Coinciding with Makar Sankranti which marks the height of winter, this colourful festival fills the sky all over Gujarat with thousands of beautifully crafted kites.

Modhera Dance Festival *(Jan)*, Modhera Sun Temple. This three-day festival of Indian classical dance is a unique opportuniy to enjoy these dance forms in the setting in which they were originally performed.

Bangles on sale at Tarnetar Fair

Tarnetar Fair *(Aug/Sep)*, Tarnetar. This unique matchmaking *mela* sees prospective grooms promenading the fairgrounds, holding colourful umbrellas, as young women wearing multi-pleated skirts swirl around in dance. A girl indicates her preference by approaching a youth for a chat, leaving it to the elders to settle matrimonial details.

Navratri *(Sep/Oct).* Navratri or "nine nights" is celebrated throughout Gujarat and is marked by nine nights of dancing in honour of the mother goddess. Women perform the *garba* dance, whirling around in a circle, clapping their hands. The exhilarating *dandia ras* is the highlight, when men and women strike small lacquered batons to a beat that gets faster and faster till it finally breaks in a frenzied crescendo.

Bhavnagar ⑫

Bhavnagar district. 200 km (124 miles) SW of Ahmedabad. 👥 *511,000.* ✈ *8 km (5 miles) SE of city centre.* 🚆 🚌

For most visitors, Bhavnagar is little more than a convenient base for exploring the magnificent temple town of Palitana. Yet Bhavnagar itself is not without charm – its old bazaar, dotted with merchants' *havelis*, has shops specializing in tie-dye textiles and gold and silver jewellery. In the southeast corner of the city, on the road to the airport, is the semi-circular **Barton Museum** (built in 1895). It houses the private collection of coins, weapons and *objets d'art* of a British officer, Colonel Barton, who served here in the 19th century.

The **Nilambagh Palace**, once the former rulers' residence, was built in 1859 and is now a luxury hotel *(see p706)* with a great banquet hall and peacocks in the garden.

🏛 **Barton Museum**
Tel *(0278) 242 4516.*
○ *10am–6:30pm Mon–Sat.*
● *public hols.* ♿ 🚫📷

Nilambagh Palace
Ahmedabad Rd. ***Tel*** *(0278) 242 4241.*

Environs

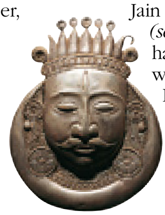
The flat grasslands of the 36 sq-km (14 sq-mile) **Velavadar National Park** (65 km/40 miles north of Bhavnagar) are home to over 1,000 blackbucks. Blackbucks were protected by the Bishnoi community *(see p385)* until the state took over this role. A walk through the park at dusk provides a glimpse of the wolves that hunt this Indian antelope, and of the nilgai that congregate at the park's watering holes.

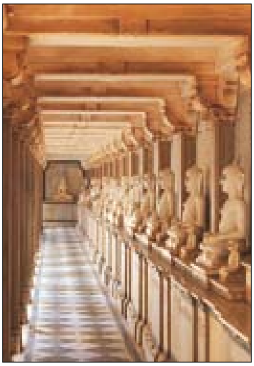
Velavadar National Park
ℹ *Forest Dept, Bhavnagar, (0278) 288 0222.* ○ *mid-Oct–May.* ♿ 📷 *extra charges.* ♿

Palitana ⑬

Bhavnagar district. 52 km (32 miles) SW of Bhavnagar. ℹ *(02848) 25 2327.* 🚆 🚌 🎉 *Falgun Suth Tera (Feb/Mar).*

An extraordinary cluster of 1008 Jain temples crowns the twin summits of Palitana's Shatrunjaya Hill and covers the saddle linking them. The first Jain *tirthankara*, Adinath *(see p396)*, is said to have visited this hill, while his chief disciple, Pundarika, is believed to have attained enlightenment here. Most of the temples date to the 16th century – earlier temples on this site were destroyed by Muslim invaders in the 14th and 15th centuries. The temples are grouped into nine fortified clusters called *tuks*, and named after the wealthy devotees who paid for their construction. Each *tuk* has a main shrine surrounded by several smaller ones. The most impressive of the main shrines is the 17th-century **Adinath Temple**, on the hill's northern ridge. Its ceilings, walls and supporting brackets are covered with carvings of saints, dancers, musicians and lotus blossoms. Many images of Adinath are enshrined inside. The southern ridge is dominated by the 16th-century **Adishvara Temple**, with its richly ornamented spire. The main image within portrays Rishabhnath. It has eyes made of crystal and is adorned with necklaces and a magnificent gold crown.


Detail from the door of a temple in Palitana


Sculptures of Jain *tirthankaras* along a temple corridor, Palitana

The 4-km (2.5-mile) ascent to the summit of the hill takes about two hours, a task made lighter by the spectacular silhouette of hundreds of temple spires and domes against the sky. From the top, there is a panoramic view of the Gulf of Cambay and the countryside.

Diu ⑭

Diu Union Territory. 418 km (260 miles) S of Ahmedabad. 👥 *21,600.* 🚆 *Delwada, 8 km (5 miles) N of town centre.* 🚌 ℹ *Diu Jetty, (02875) 225 2653.*

The little island of Diu covers an area of just 39 sq km (15 sq miles). Once known as the "Gibraltar of the East", it was

The 19th-century Nilambagh Palace in Bhavnagar, set in a huge garden

The abandoned seaside fort at Diu, dating to the 16th century

a flourishing Portuguese colony from the 16th century onwards. It was ceded to India in 1961 and is today a Union Territory administered by the Central Government. The majestic **Diu Fort** on the eastern end of the island dominates the town. Built in 1535 when the Portuguese took control of Diu, it is worth a visit for its impressive double moat, its old cannons and for the superb views of the sunset it offers.

Diu town, sandwiched between the fort to the east and the city wall to the west, retains a distinctly Portuguese atmosphere in its churches and its many mansions. The **Nagar Seth Haveli** is particularly outstanding, with carved balconies and stone lions. The **Church of St Paul** (built in 1610) has a lovely, carved wooden altar, statues of the saints and a sonorous old organ. Its impressive Gothic façade was rebuilt in 1807. Nearby, the **St Thomas Church** (built in 1598) houses a museum of religious artifacts and stone inscriptions linked to the island's history.

The beach at **Nagoa**, 7 km (4 miles) from the town, has a long stretch of sand fringed with palm trees. Other beaches within easy reach of Diu are Jallandhar and Chakratirth which has a sunset viewpoint. As a Union Territory, Diu is not subject to Gujarat's prohibition laws. This explains the profusion of bars in the town, and the invasion, on weekends, by thirsty Gujaratis.

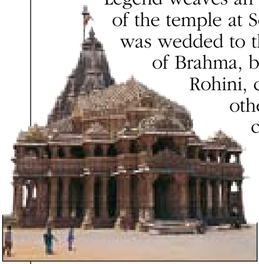
Somnath ⑮

Junagadh district. 406 km (252 miles) SW of Ahmedabad. 🚌 🚫

Situated on the coast with a commanding view of the Arabian Sea, the **Somnath Temple** is revered as one of the 12 most sacred sites dedicated to Lord Shiva. The temple's legendary wealth made it the target of successive plundering armies, beginning with Mahmud of Ghazni in 1026, who is said to have made off with camel-loads of gold and precious gems, leaving the edifice in ruins. The cycle of pillage and reconstruction at Somnath continued over the next seven centuries. The present temple, made of stone, was built in 1950.

East of the temple, at the confluence of three rivers, is **Triveni Tirth**. The ghats going down to the sea at this spot are said to mark the place where Lord Krishna's funeral rites were performed, after a hunter mistook him for a deer and killed him.

THE MOON GOD AND SOMNATH


The Somnath Temple, visited by devotees of Shiva

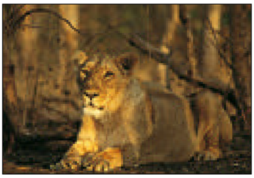
Legend weaves an interesting tale around the origins of the temple at Somnath. Som, the Moon God, was wedded to the 27 daughters of Daksha, a son of Brahma, but he loved only one of them, Rohini, causing great frustration to the other sisters. An infuriated Daksha cursed his son-in-law, causing him to lose his lustre. In despair, Som turned to Shiva and served him with such zealous devotion that Shiva gave him respite from the curse – he would wax for half the month and wane for the rest. In gratitude the Moon God built a Shiva temple at Somnath.

Sasan Gir National Park ⑯

Junagadh district. 368 km (229 miles) SW of Ahmedabad. **Entry point:** *Sasan Gir.* 🚆 🚌 ℹ *For permits contact Field Director, Sinh Sadan, Sasan Gir (02877) 28 5541.* 🕐 *mid-Oct–mid-Jun.* 💰 📷 *extra charges.* 🚙 *Jeeps available.*

Until a century ago, the Asiatic lion roamed vast areas of India, from Gujarat all the way to Bihar in the east. Now, the Sasan Gir National Park is the only habitat left of the lion outside Africa. Asiatic lions are smaller than African lions, with a fold of skin along the belly. The males have shorter manes. About 320 lions live in Gir's 259 sq km (100 sq miles) of dry scrub forest. By the early 1900s, the Asiatic lion had been hunted and poached almost to the point of extinction. Their remarkable resurgence in Gir is attributed to the conservation efforts of the erstwhile nawab of Junagadh *(see p426)* and, subsequently, the Gujarat government.

A number of rivers wind through Gir, making it a haven for a range of wildlife, including the caracal, the *chausingha* (four-horned antelope), the blackbuck and a substantial leopard population.


An Asiatic lioness basking in the sun in Sasan Gir Sanctuary

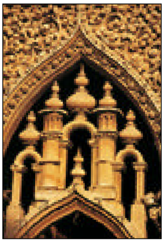
A view of Palitana's 1,008 Jain temples, clustered on top of Shatrunjaya Hill ▷

The impressive Jain temple complex on Girnar Hill, just outside Junagadh

Junagadh ⑰

Junagadh district. 393 km (244 miles) SW of Ahmedabad. 👥 *168,700.* 🚆 🚌 ℹ *Majwadi Darwaza, (0285) 262 1201.* ◒ *Mon–Sat.* 🎉 *Bhavnath Fair (Feb/Mar), Kartik Mela (Oct/Nov).*

Junagadh, which means "Old Fort", takes its name from the ancient fort of Uparkot, built in the 4th century on a plateau at the eastern edge of the town. The fort is surrounded by massive walls, over 20 m (66 ft) high in places, and a 90-m (295-ft) deep moat inside the walls. This once teemed with crocodiles that were fed on criminals and political enemies. An ornate, triple-arched gateway marks the entrance to the fort. Inside, a cobbled path leads past Hindu temples to the now deserted **Jami Masjid** at the top of the plateau. Its carved stonework and pillars show that it was constructed on the remains of a destroyed Hindu temple. Nearby are a cluster of Buddhist caves dating to the 2nd century. The fort also has two fine 11th-century stepwells, the Navghan Kuan and the Adi Charan Vav.



Intricate carving on Mahabat Maqbara

In the mid-19th century, the nawabs of Junagadh moved down from the old fort into new colonial-style palaces in the city. The **Durbar Hall** of the City Palace, built in 1870, houses a museum with the typical trappings of royalty – palanquins, silver thrones and old armour. A complex of royal mausoleums can be seen near the city's railway station, the most notable of which is the **Mahabat Maqbara** with splendid silver doors.

Junagadh's main attraction, however, is **Girnar Hill**, 6 km (4 miles) east of the city. An extinct volcano, this has been a holy site for Buddhists, Jains and Hindus since the 3rd century BC. Over 4,000 steps lead to the top of the 1,080-m (3,543-ft) high hill. En route is an **Ashokan Rock Edict**, dating to 250 BC *(see p42)*, that conveys Emperor Ashoka's message of non-violence and peace. Halfway up the hill are a cluster of beautiful Jain temples. Most notable among them is the **Neminath Temple**, enshrining a black marble image of the 22nd Jain *tirthankara (see p396)* who is believed to have died here. The 12th-century **Amba Mata Temple**, at the summit, is very popular with newlyweds, who come seeking blessings for conjugal bliss.

🏛 Durbar Hall Museum

Tel *(0285) 262 1685.* ○ *Thu–Tue.* ● *2nd & 4th Sat.* 🖐

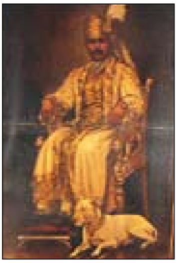
Porbandar ⑱

Porbandar district. 404 km (251 miles) SW of Ahmedabad. 👥 *133,100.* 🚆 🚌 ◒ *Mon–Sat.* ℹ *(0286) 221 085.* 📷 *extra charges.*

Once a major port on the Arabian Sea, Porbandar is today famous as Mahatma Gandhi's birthplace. The house where Gandhi was born in 1869 still stands in a small alley, in the western part of the city. Next door is the **Kirti Mandir Museum** with photographs from the Mahatma's life, and extracts

THE NAWAB OF JUNAGADH AND HIS DOGS

The 11th Nawab of Junagadh (1900–59), like his forebears, had a passion for breeding dogs, and these pedigreed pooches, 800 of them, were housed in luxury with separate rooms and personal attendants. The Nawab even held elaborate banquets to celebrate their "nuptials". On the eve of India's Independence, when the princely states were given the option of either remaining in India or becoming a part of Pakistan, the Nawab's decision to accede to Pakistan was thwarted by popular protest. The Nawab, however, decided to leave Junagadh. When the time for departure came, the Nawab, true to form, boarded the aircraft with his dogs, leaving behind his entire harem of concubines.



Portrait of the Nawab with his favourite dog

from his speeches and writings. The city has little else to attract visitors and in recent years it has gained the dubious distinction of housing local mafia dons. Interestingly, large sections of Gujarat's diasporic population originated from this district.

Entrance to the Kirti Mandir Museum, Porbandar

Dwarka ⑲

Jamnagar district. 453 km (282 miles) W of Ahmedabad. 🚆 🚌 ⛺ *Janmashtami (Jul/Aug).* ℹ *(02892) 23 4013.*

Legend has it that about 5,000 years ago, Lord Krishna *(see p679)* forsook his kingdom at Mathura *(see p178)* and came to live on the seafront at Dwarka, where he founded a glittering new city. It is believed that the city was subsequently submerged under the sea. Whether or not this is myth or fact, recent excavations of the seabed have indeed established the existence of a submerged city in the vicinity of Dwarka.

Hindu pilgrims flock to Dwarka throughout the year. The city's main temple is the towering **Dwarkadhish Temple**, dating to the 16th century. Built of granite and sandstone on a plinth area of 540 m (1,772 ft), it is supported by 60 pillars and rises seven storeys to an impressive height of 51 m (167 ft).

Situated a short distance to its east is the small, lavishly carved **Rukmini Temple**. Built in the 12th century, it is dedicated to Krishna's wife.

Jamnagar ⑳

Jamnagar district. 308 km (191 miles) SW of Ahmedabad. 👥 *447,800.* ✈ *10 km (6 miles) W of city.* 🚆 🚌 ⛀ *Mon–Sat.*

Founded by a local prince, Jam Rawal, in 1540, Jamnagar's old walled city is dominated by the **Lakhota Fort**, the original seat of its rulers, and the **Ranmal Lake** which surrounds it. The fort was badly damaged during the earthquake in January 2001, though visitors are still allowed inside. The museum in the fort has fine sculptures from nearby excavation sites, dating from the 9th to 18th centuries. Close by is the Kotha Bastion which once stored the rulers' arsenal.

In the heart of the old town is the circular **Darbar Gadh** where the Jamsahebs (as the rulers were called) held public audiences. This structure was also damaged heavily in the 2001 earthquake, but the ground floor is safe for visitors. The lanes leading off from here are worth exploring as the city is famous for its tie-dye fabric and silver jewellery. In this area are two Jain temples, the **Shantinath** and **Adinath Temples**, entirely covered with mirrorwork, gold leaf, murals and mosaics. Close to them is the 19th-century **Ratanbai Mosque**, its doors inlaid with mother-of-pearl. In the early 20th century, Jamnagar was ruled by the famous cricketer KS Ranjit Sinhji (r.1907–33). The city acquired several elegant public buildings and parks under his able administration.

🏛 Lakhota Fort Museum

○ *Thu–Tue.* ● *2nd & 4th Sat.*
♿ 🚫📷

Environs

The **Marine National Park**, in the Gulf of Kutch, is 30 km (19 miles) from Jamnagar. An archipelago of 42 islands, the park's marine life is best viewed from the island of Pirotan.

Marine National Park

⛴ *Jamnagar jetty. For permits contact the Park Director, Jamnagar, (0288) 255 2077.* ♿

Rajkot ㉑

Rajkot district. 216 km (134 miles) W of Ahmedabad. 👥 *966,700.* ✈ *1 km (0.6 miles) NW of city centre.* 🚆 🚌 ℹ *Bhavnagar House, (0281) 223 4507.* ⛀ *Mon–Sat.*

The headquarters of the Saurashtra region (southwest Gujarat) during the British Raj, modern Rajkot is a commercial and industrial town. The centre of the region's groundnut trade, it is also reputed for its handicrafts.

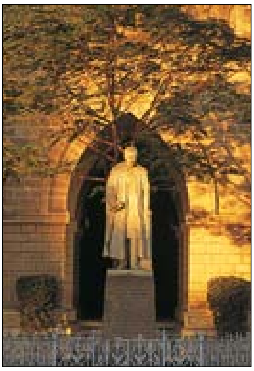
Rajkot's many 19th-century buildings give it a distinctly colonial flavour. The **Watson Museum** in Jubilee Bagh, named after a British Political Agent, has a fine collection of portraits of local rulers, tribal artifacts, archaeological finds from Harappan sites and a large statue of Queen Victoria. The impressive **Rajkumar College**, established by the British for the sons of the Gujarat nobility, remains a prestigious public school.

🏛 Watson Museum

Tel *(0281) 222 3065.* ○ *9am–1pm, 3–6pm Thu–Tue.* ● *2nd & 4th Sat.*
♿ 📷 *extra charges.*

Environs

Wankaner Palace, 39 km (24 miles) northeast of Rajkot, is an eclectic mix of Mughal, Italian and Victorian-Gothic styles. Though still inhabited by the former royal family, a portion is now a luxury hotel. **Halvad**, 125 km (78 miles) north of Rajkot, has a 17th-century lakeside palace.



Statue of the first principal, Rajkumar College, Rajkot

Rabari women near Bhuj, bringing water home

Bhuj ㉒

Kutch district. 217 km (135 miles) W of Ahmedabad. 👥 *121,100.* ✈ *7 km (4 miles) N of city centre.* 🚉 🚌 ℹ *Gujarat Tourism, Toran Rann Resort, Mirzapur Bhuj, (02832) 22 4950.* 🎉 *Ashadhi Bij (Jul/Aug).*

Until the earthquake of January 2001 reduced much of Bhuj to rubble, this was a fascinating walled city, with beautiful palaces and *havelis*, and a bazaar famous for its rich handicrafts and jewellery. Bhuj was the capital of the prosperous princely state of Kutch, whose wealth derived from its sea trade with East Africa and the Persian Gulf ports. African slaves were an important part of Kutch's maritime trade, and their many descendants still live in the city. The town's main attraction was the **Darbargadh Palace** complex, which houses the fabulous **Aina Mahal** or "Palace of Mirrors". Built in 1752, it was damaged in the 2001 earthquake and was temporarily closed down but has now been re-opened after extensive renovation. The palace and its contents are linked to the remarkable life of its Gujarati architect, Ramsinh Malam. Shipwrecked off the East African coast as a 12-year-old, he was rescued by a Dutch ship and taken to the Netherlands, where he spent the next 17 years. There, he blossomed as a craftsman, mastering Delft tile-making, glass-blowing, enamelling and clock-making. When he returned home, the ruler of Kutch, Rao Lakha, gave him an opportunity to display these skills. The Aina Mahal was thus decorated with Venetian-style chandeliers, Delft blue tiles, enamelled silver objects and chiming clocks – all made locally under Ramsinh's supervision. At the same time, local crafts of the highest quality were also displayed, such as a superb ivory-inlaid door, jewelled shields and swords, and a marvellously detailed 15-m (49-ft) long scroll painting of a royal procession, complete with African pageboys. All these form a part of the palace museum.

The royal cenotaphs, the Swaminarayan Temple and the bazaar are now unfortunately in ruins, but the excellent **Folk Arts Museum** still stands. It has a choice collection of Kutch textiles and local crafts, and a reconstructed village of Rabari *bhoongas (see p430).*

🏛 **Folk Arts Museum**
Mandvi Rd. ***Tel*** *(02832) 220 541.*
○ *Mon–Sat.* 📷 🛍

EARTHQUAKE IN GUJARAT

On 26 January 2001, at 8:46am, as India celebrated its Republic Day, a devastating earthquake struck Gujarat. Its epicentre was in Kutch. Measuring 7.7 on the Richter Scale, it destroyed most of Bhuj, the headquarters of Kutch district, as well as Anjar, the second largest town in Kutch, and razed 450 villages in the district to the ground. Among the 20,000 people killed in the earthquake were 400 schoolchildren of Anjar, who were crushed under the rubble of falling buildings in a narrow street as they marched jauntily through town in the Republic Day Parade. In the state capital, Ahmedabad, most of those killed were trapped in recently-built highrise apartment buildings, which collapsed like houses of cards while, ironically, centuries-old historic monuments throughout the state suffered relatively little damage. An exception was the spectacular 18th-century Darbargadh Palace in Bhuj, with its richly decorated interiors showcasing the finest Gujarati craftsmanship. Much of the damage it suffered is irreparable, however, after some necessary renovation it is open to visitors yet again. In contrast, the traditional, round mud *bhoongas* of the semi-nomadic Rabaris of Kutch withstood the earthquake remarkably well. Gujarat, and in particular Kutch, has always been an area of seismic activity, and some historians believe this is one reason that cities of the Indus Valley Civilization *(see p41)*, such as Dholavira and Lothal, declined around 1900 BC. In more recent times, 1,100 people died in the 1819 earthquake and 7,000 in the 1956 earthquake. The disaster of 2001 made more than 250,000 people homeless. A massive rehabilitation effort began almost immediately. Besides the Gujarat government and the Indian Union, over 150 countries readily came forward to provide assistance. Above all, it was the resilience of the residents that brought life back to normal.

Labourers at an earthquake relocation center, Bhuj

The tranquil seafront at Mandvi, once a busy port

Mandvi ㉓

Bhuj district. 60 km (37 miles) SW of Bhuj. 👥 *14,300.* 🚌

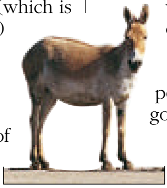
This old port town has fine beaches, good swimming, and camel and horse rides along the shore. Close to the beach is the **Vijay Vilas Palace**, an impressive Indo-Edwardian pile built in the 1940s as a royal summer retreat. Its lovely garden, drawing room and rooftop terrace are open to visitors and provide beautiful views of the sea. In the town is the curious 18th-century **Old Palace** of the Kutch rulers (now a girls' school). Architecturally a blend of local and European styles, its façade is decorated with cherubic Dutch boys holding wine goblets – architect Ramsinh Malam's touching salute to his adopted country.

🏛 **Vijay Vilas Palace**
◯ *Thu–Tue.* ¤ 📷 *extra charges.*

Dholavira ㉔

Bhuj district. 250 km (155 miles) NE of Bhuj. 🚌 ℹ *For permission contact the Superintendant of Police, Bhuj, (02832) 25 0444.* ◯ *daily.*

Dholavira is a small village where archaeologists have unearthed extensive remains of a city that dates back to about 3000 BC. Lying on Khadir island in the Rann of Kutch it is, along with Lothal *(see p416)*, the largest known Indus Valley settlement in India. The site reveals evidence of a remarkable, planned city with broad roads, containing a central citadel, a middle town with spacious dwellings, a lower town with open spaces for markets and festivities, and two stadia. An intriguing ten-character inscription (which is still to be deciphered) is on the citadel's northern gate. The presence of large reservoirs and a dam reflect the existence of sophisticated systems for harvesting water.



The Asiatic wild ass, found in Kutch

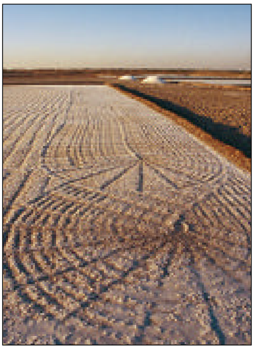
The Little Rann of Kutch Sanctuary ㉕

Kutch district. **Entry points:** Dhrangadhra, 130 km (81 miles) W of Ahmedabad, & Dasada, 117 km (73 miles) NW of Ahmedabad. 🚆 *Dhrangadhra, 20 km (12 miles) S of park.* 🚌 *Dhrangadhra & Dasada, then bus or jeep.* ℹ *Gujarat Tourism, Ashram Rd, Ahmedabad, (079) 2657 8046. For permits & tours contact Forest Office, Dhrangadhra.* ☞ ¤ 📷 *extra charges.*

An expanse of salt flats and grasslands in northwest Gujarat, the Little Rann of Kutch has a stark and unforgettable beauty – in sunlight, the salt crystals in the sand glitter like diamonds, while at night they bathe the landscape in an eerie blue haze. Every year, during the monsoon, when the sea and rivers flood the region, the salt flats are transformed into great marshy swamps, with patches of higher ground forming grassy islands known as *bets*. Some 4,841 sq km (1,869 sq miles) of this unique ecosystem, which supports a variety of rare fauna, form a wildlife sanctuary which is one of the last refuges of the Asiatic wild ass *(Equus hemionus khur)*, known locally as *ghorkhur*. Akin to the Tibetan *kiang*, the *ghorkhur* is distinguished by a dark stripe along its back. Only about 1,000 of them now remain. Known for its speed (up to 60 km or 37 miles per hour), the wild ass lives in herds led by a stallion, and survives by migrating between the grassy *bets* through the seasons, in search of food.

The sanctuary also has a large population of nilgai (blue bull), blackbuck, *chinkara* (Indian gazelle), wolves, and the rare caracal. Birdlife includes migratory demoiselle cranes, pelicans and flamingoes who come to the salt marshes during the winter months.

Dhrangadhra and Dasada are both interesting bases from which to visit the Little Rann of Kutch Sanctuary. Dasada has a 15th-century fort and a village where potters and textile printers practise their craft. The family of Dasada's former feudal chiefs arrange accommodation and guided tours of the Rann. Dhrangadhra, capital of a former princely state, has a fine 18th-century palace, and a bazaar with interesting colonial buildings. Tours of the sanctuary can be arranged through the Forest office here. Accommodation is available in the government rest house.

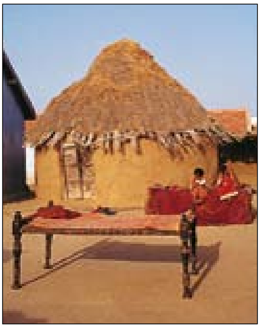


Salt pans in the Rann, a major source of livelihood in Kutch

Rural Life and Art in Kutch

Clay storage niche

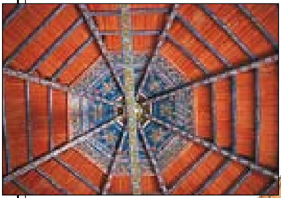
Kutch is home to several pastoral communities, many of them semi-nomadic herders of camels and sheep. Among them are the Rabaris, whose round houses *(bhoongas)* with conical roofs are a distinctive feature of the Kutch landscape. These communities are skilled in a variety of crafts, the vibrant hues and forms of their creations adding beauty to their stark surroundings. Anjar, which used to be the crafts centre of Kutch, was tragically destroyed in the January 2001 earthquake, as were many of the crafts villages near Bhuj. Despite this, the intrepid craftspeople continue to work and sell their creations at shops in Mumbai, Ahmedabad and Delhi.

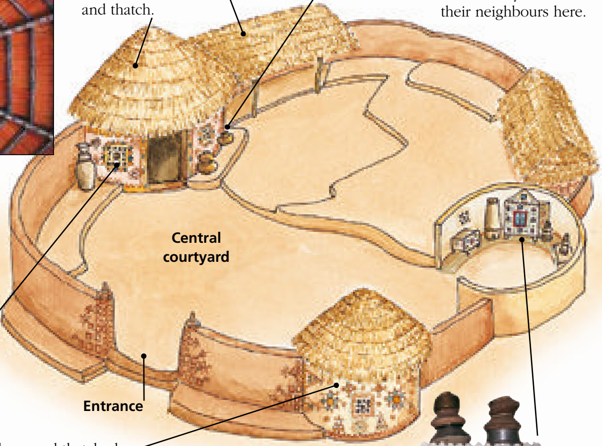


A typical toadstool-shaped Rabari house in Kutch

THE RABARI BHOONGA

The *bhoongas* of the Rabaris, superbly designed for the hot, arid climate of Kutch, are also structurally solid. Most of them withstood the 2001 earthquake. A typical cluster of *bhoongas*, their beautifully decorated interiors displaying the artistic skills of the Rabaris, can be seen at Tunda Vandh, 15 km (9 miles) east of Mandvi.





Bhoongas are built of hard, packed mud and thatch.

Shed for livestock

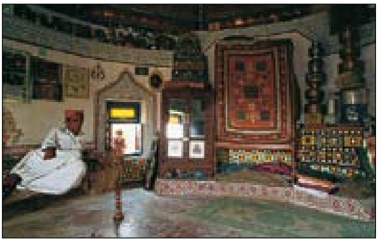
The *otla* is a platform surrounding the house, shaded by the thatched roof. Women do embroidery and meet their neighbours here.

The roof *is conical, with a deep overhang to keep the walls cool. The parasol-shaped roof frame is made of wood, covered with tightly woven thatch.*

Small windows, set into the thick walls, are beautifully embellished with brass appliqué patterns.

The thick walls, tiny windows and thatched roofs provide excellent insulation against the harsh desert climate. The circular shape helps the smooth circulation of air inside.

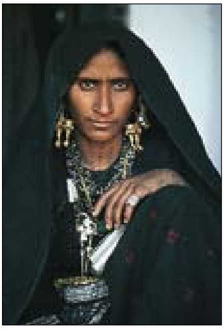
Storage jars *and chests, for grain, milk or clothes, are made of clay, and decorated by the women with fine bird, animal and geometric motifs.*



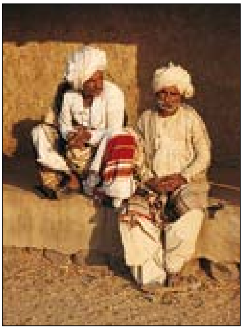
The circular living space *is plastered with white clay, covered with relief patterns and studded with tiny mirrors to provide more light to its dark, cool interior. Niches and shelves built into the walls provide storage for items of everyday use.*

PEOPLE

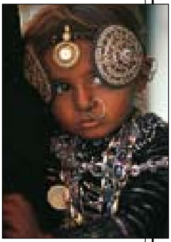
The pastoral communities of Kutch include Jaths, Ahirs, Meghwals, Bharwads and Sodhas, as well as Rabaris. While the men wander with their flocks, the women, children and elders stay at home, adding to the family income with their crafts skills.



Rabari women *dress in black wool, dramatically offset with silver jewellery. They also sport tattoos of peacocks and camels, as well as small crosses to keep away the evil eye.*



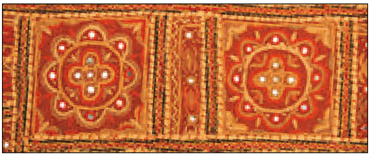
Rabari men, *in contrast to the women, wear only white, with fine embroidery at the back of their pleated* kediyans *(jackets). White and red woven shawls and voluminous turbans complete their attire.*



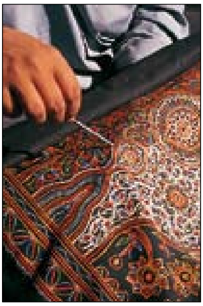
Rabari girls *wear the family's finest heirlooms. They begin embroidering their trousseau dresses as soon as they can hold a needle.*

CRAFT

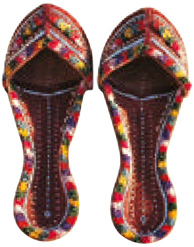
Crafts are not just a means of earning and employment for the rural people of Kutch. They are also a proud and creative expression of each community's distinct culture and identity, through which utilitarian objects like cupboards, quilts, shoes, cowbells or clay dishes are transformed into art forms.



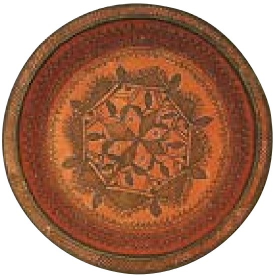
Embroidery *is done by most semi-nomadic communities. This section of a large wall hanging shows the work of a Rabari woman.*



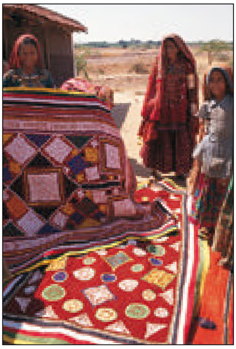
Rogan, *a speciality of Niruna village near Bhuj, is a unique technique by which cloth is decorated with intricate, embossed lacquer-work patterns.*



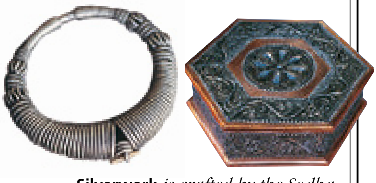
Leather *objects are made by Meghwal men. They are embellished with bright tassels and embroidery.*



Pottery *dishes such as this large platter are used at village feasts. They are made by the men of the Kumbhar (potter) community.*



Patchwork *in vivid colours, using scraps and waste material, is done by Bharwad women to make items such as quilts, awnings and camel saddle covers.*



Silverwork *is crafted by the Sodha community, who also make jewellery to order in traditional designs, for the other pastoral communities.*

SOUTHWESTERN INDIA

INTRODUCING SOUTHWESTERN INDIA 434–441

MUMBAI 442–463

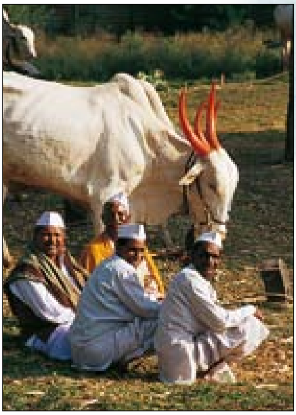
MAHARASHTRA 464–483

GOA 484–509

KARNATAKA 510–545

Introducing Southwestern India

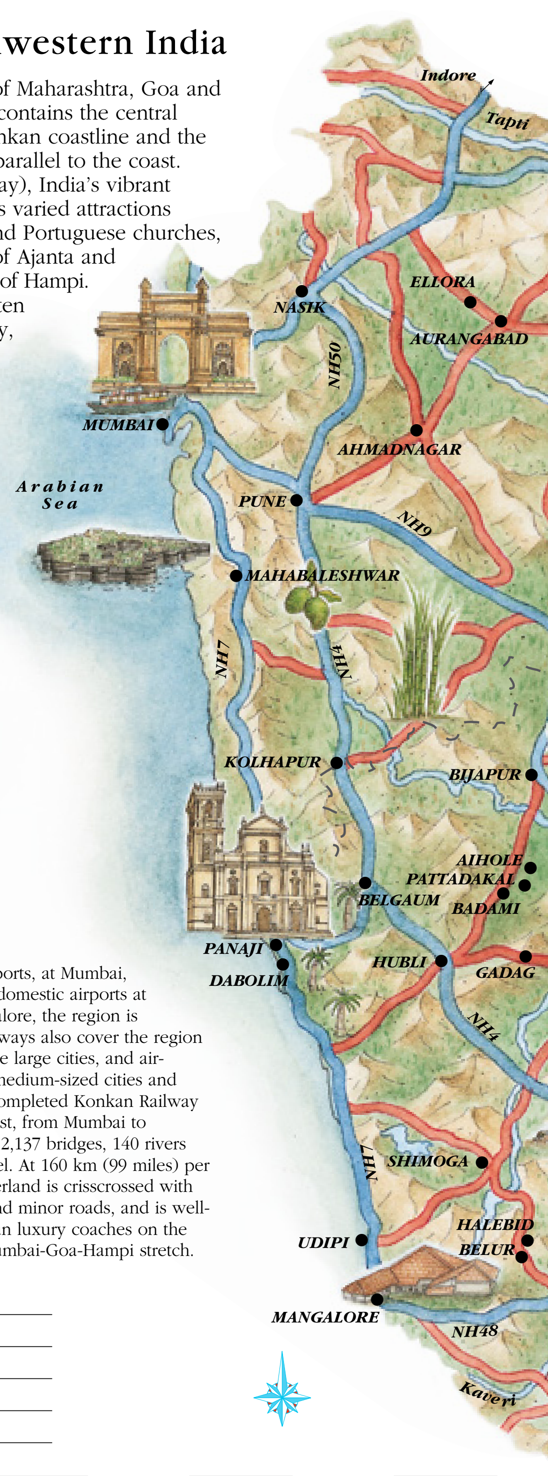
Encompassing the three states of Maharashtra, Goa and Karnataka, Southwestern India contains the central Deccan Plateau, the narrow Konkan coastline and the craggy Western Ghats that run parallel to the coast. Its major city is Mumbai (Bombay), India's vibrant commercial capital. The region's varied attractions include Goa's idyllic beaches and Portuguese churches, the ancient caves and temples of Ajanta and Ellora, and the magnificent ruins of Hampi. Further south are Bangalore, often described as Asia's Silicon Valley, the former princely state of Mysore, and the great Hoysala temples of Belur and Halebid.



Maharashtrian farmers with their oxen, often colourfully decorated

GETTING AROUND

This region has three international airports, at Mumbai, Bangalore and Dabolim in Goa. With domestic airports at Pune, Aurangabad, Nagpur and Mangalore, the region is well connected by air. The Indian Railways also cover the region extensively. Fast trains run between the large cities, and air-conditioned trains also connect most medium-sized cities and townships. The spectacular, recently completed Konkan Railway runs 760 km (472 miles) along the coast, from Mumbai to Thiruvananthapuram (in Kerala), over 2,137 bridges, 140 rivers and through 83 km (52 miles) of tunnel. At 160 km (99 miles) per hour, it is India's fastest line. The hinterland is crisscrossed with numerous national highways, major and minor roads, and is well-connected by bus. Private operators run luxury coaches on the more popular routes, including the Mumbai-Goa-Hampi stretch.


Indore
Tapti
ELLORA
NASIK
AURANGABAD
NH50
MUMBAI
AHMADNAGAR
Arabian Sea
PUNE
NH9
MAHABALESHWAR
NH7
NH4
KOLHAPUR
BIJAPUR
AIHOLE
PATTADAKAL
BELGAUM
BADAMI
PANAJI
DABOLIM
HUBLI
GADAG
NH4
NH17
SHIMOGA
HALEBID
UDIPI
BELUR
MANGALORE
NH48
Kaveri

KEY

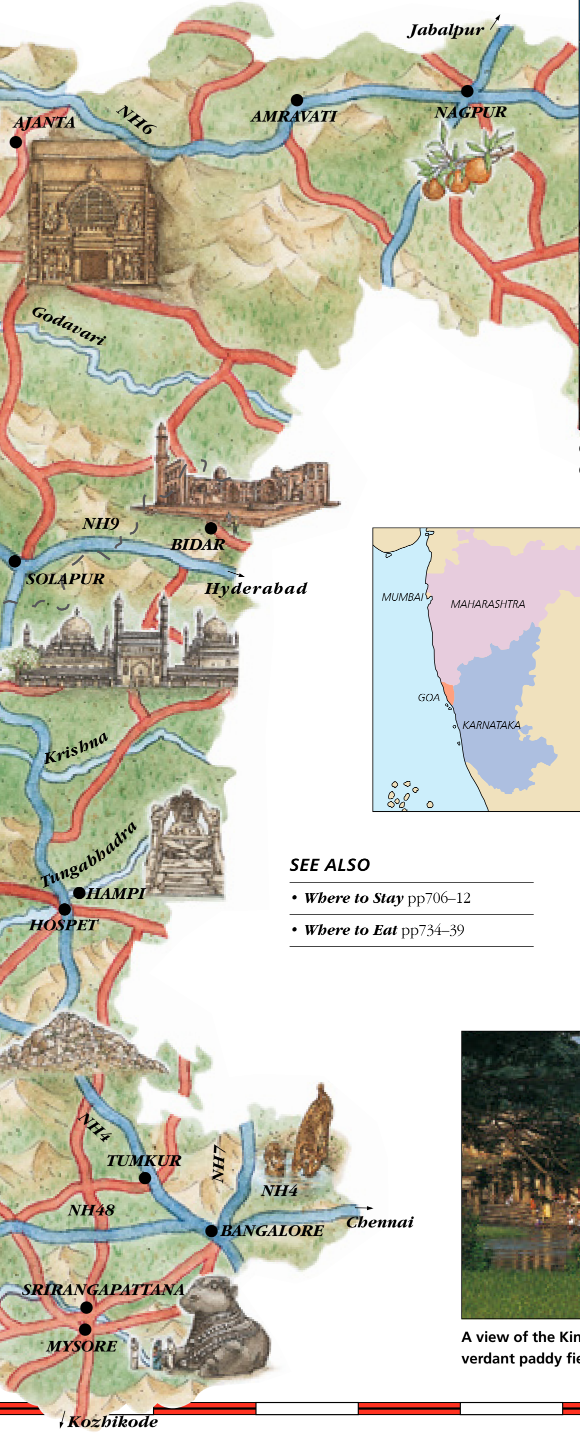
▬ National highway

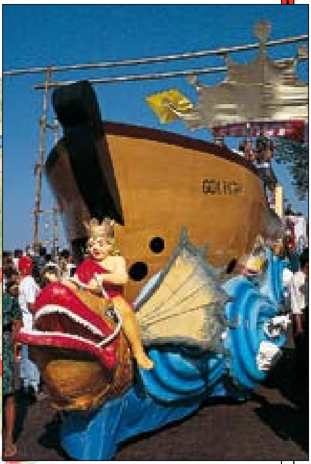
▬ Major road

▬ River

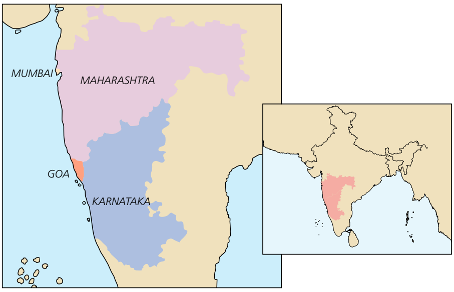
- - State border

◁ **Banyan trees forming a canopy over a stretch of road in Maharashtra**


Jabalpur
AJANTA
NH6
AMRAVATI
NAGPUR
Godavari
NH9
BIDAR
SOLAPUR
Hyderabad
Krishna
Tungabhadra
HAMPI
HOSPET
NH4
TUMKUR
NH7
NH4
NH48
BANGALORE
Chennai
SRIRANGAPATTANA
MYSORE
Kozhikode



Colourful floats on parade, during Goa's annual Carnival


MUMBAI
MAHARASHTRA
GOA
KARNATAKA

SEE ALSO

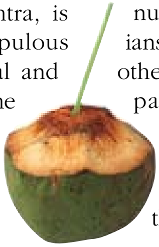
- ***Where to Stay*** pp706–12
- ***Where to Eat*** pp734–39

0 km 100
0 miles 100

A view of the King's Bathing Ghat surrounded by verdant paddy fields, Srirangapattana, Karnataka

A PORTRAIT OF SOUTHWESTERN INDIA

The southwest is a region of many and varied splendours. Its three states, Maharashtra, Goa and Karnataka, contain golden beaches, wooded hills, serene villages along the picturesque Arabian Sea coastline, and two of India's most cosmopolitan and dynamic cities – Mumbai (formerly Bombay) and Bangalore.



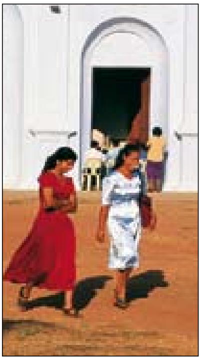
Green coconut

Mumbai, capital of Maharashtra, is India's largest and most populous city, as well as its commercial and financial capital. It is also home to the world's largest cinema industry, popularly known as Bollywood. The city presents extraordinary and sometimes shocking contrasts – the glamorous world of film stars and business tycoons exists side by side with the squalor of slums and shantytowns, where over three million people (nearly one-third of Mumbai's population) live. The dominant image, however, is that of an upbeat, street-smart city full of dynamism and *joie de vivre*.

Mumbai's population includes Marathi-speaking Hindus, a sizeable number of Muslims and Christians, as well as Jews, Parsis and other communities from different parts of India, drawn by its vibrant entrepreneurial culture, and often, by dreams of making it big in films. While this makes Mumbai remarkably cosmopolitan, it has on occasion led to sectarian strife, especially over the past decade, since the rise of the militant Hindu rightwing Shiv Sena Party.

Maharashtra is a vast state, its population of over 96 million making it politically important, and major industries based on cotton, sugar, engineering goods and processed foods lending it economic vitality. In recent years, strawberry fields and

Little fishing boats in Mumbai's harbour, against a backdrop of the city's skyscrapers



Goan women on their way to Sunday Mass

grape vineyards have made their appearance in its rich agricultural hinterland, but the most prized crop remains the Alfonso mango, a particularly sweet and luscious variety, which is exported across the world. Central Maharashtra has two World Heritage sites to its credit, at Ajanta and Ellora *(see pp476–81)*. The murals and sculptures found here testify to the common, ancient roots of Hinduism and Buddhism.

Many visitors travel by train from Mumbai to the tiny neighbouring state of Goa. The Konkan Railway which connects the two, and continues southwards to Karnataka, is a wonderful way to see the lush coastal scenery of coconut groves, spice plantations and fishing villages. Goa was a Portuguese colony from 1510 until 1961, when it was liberated by the Indian Army. The Portuguese departed peacefully, leaving behind a rich cultural legacy in cathedrals and mansions, music, dance, and in its distinctive cuisine. Another legacy of 450 years of Portuguese rule is in religion – almost one-third of Goa's population is Roman Catholic. Tourism and related industries are today a major source of livelihood here. Visitors from all over the world throng the beautiful beaches, which offer secluded palm-fringed retreats, as well as lively resorts buzzing with bars, cafés and discos.

A Hanuman statue in Nasik, Maharashtra

Karnataka is often described as the geographical and cultural meeting point between India's Dravidian south and its Indo-Aryan north. The state's varied landscape and architecture both reflect this unique melange. Karnataka's narrow strip of fertile coastland is backed by the green hills of the Western Ghats, covered with forests of fragrant sandalwood and teak. These slope down to a vast plateau, watered by the Kaveri and Krishna rivers. This is the state's historic and cultural heartland, dotted with architectural treasures in an extraordinary variety of styles. They were built by local Hindu and Muslim dynasties, as well as by ambitious rulers from the north, Maratha warriors and medieval Islamic chieftains, all of whom had once established kingdoms here.

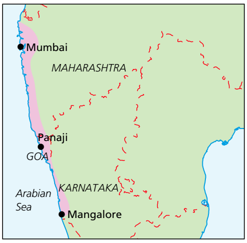
Bangalore, the state capital, presents a sharp contrast to Karnataka's historic sites. As the ebullient centre of India's burgeoning computer software industry, this once laid-back town has been transformed into a globalized, high-tech showcase for contemporary India. Several multinational corporations have opened offices here, while pubs and shopping malls line its streets, catering to a young, cosmopolitan population.

The lush landscape along Karnataka's coastline

The Konkan Coast

A Konkani fisherwoman

All along the Konkan Coast, from Mumbai to the south of Mangalore, are villages where, for over 2,000 years, fishing communities have harvested the fruits of the sea. A distinctive culture has developed in this area, protected by the forested hills of the Western Ghats. Beyond the coastline are fertile paddy fields, and plantations of coconut, cashew, betel nut, rubber, pepper and other spices. This is also India's monsoon land, where the Southwest Monsoon is at its heaviest, and where Arab merchants, drawn by the monsoon winds, came to trade long before the Europeans.



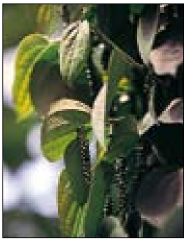
LOCATOR MAP

▨ Extent of Area

Harvesting *ripe paddy is a full-time occupation for the entire village.*

PADDY CULTIVATION

In wet paddy cultivation, seedlings are raised in a nursery and then transplanted in waterlogged fields when they are 30 cm (12 in) high.



Pepper, cashew and betel nut *are some of the major cash crops that this region grows in abundance.*

A rubber plantation *bungalow is festooned with strips of cured rubber hanging out to dry.*

FISHERFOLK OF THE COAST

Coastal people belong to different communities, speak their own dialects and celebrate local festivals. Strong and hard-working, their lives are ruled by natural forces.

Fishermen prepare their boats *before they cast off just before dawn. The boats return by late morning.*

A basket of freshly caught fish *is carried to the shore to be sold directly to waiting customers.*

Small boats moored in the Konkan backwaters

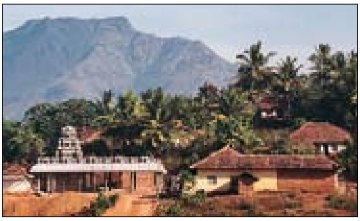
Coastal dwellings *have sloping roofs made of tiles to deflect the heavy rains during the monsoon.*

These women *from Mumbai's small Koli fishing community are dressed in bright festival finery.*

Flowers *are a common form of adornment and are picked each morning by girls and women for their hair.*

KONKAN COAST

The narrow coastal strip that runs along the Arabian Sea is sheltered by the verdant slopes of the Western Ghats. This region can be explored either by road or on the Konkan Railway *(see p434)*.



The Western Ghats, *or the Sahyadri Range, run in an unbroken line along the coast.*

Monsoon clouds *herald the onset of the monsoon, when the coast is lashed by torrential rain from June to early September.*

Dried fish *is eaten during the monsoon when heavy rains prevent fishing.*

Local fish markets *sell a large variety of freshly caught produce.*

Boat building *is done by expert artisans who repair old boats using traditional methods, as well as build new ones from locally procured wood.*

The Flavours of Southwestern India

A large part of this region lies on the shores of the Arabian Sea and consequently fish, coconut and rice are the dominant ingredients. Mumbai is a metropolis, home to many groups of people, and the city's cuisine reflects its myriad influences. Further south, along the Konkan Coast to Goa and Mangalore, the fish and rice diet has regional variations. Interior Maharashtra has a large number of vegetarian communities especially around Pune, although spicy mutton curries are a speciality of the state. Karnataka's food is a mosaic of distinct communities such as the coastal Udipi vegetarian fare and the meat-based food of Kodagu.

Custard apple

A local woman selling bananas, coconuts and other fruit

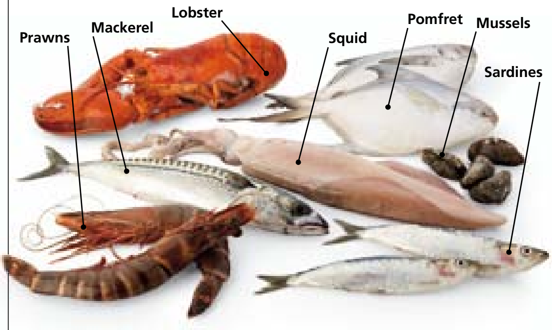
BASIC DISHES

In Maharashtra, rice, wheat, lentils and *jowar* (sorghum maize) form the backbone of the people's diet. This accompanies the *bhaji* (a vegetable dish) or *rassa*, (curried vegetables cooked in groundnut oil). The food is distinguished by a blend of spices, coriander, sesame, cumin seeds and dried coconut *(goda)* and *kalaa masalas*. *Koshimbirs* (relishes freshly made with cucumber or carrots) perk up the meal.

In Karnataka, the three staples are rice, *jowar* and *ragi* (finger millet). In rural areas, *ragi* is steam-cooked, rolled into balls and served with hot chutney or *huli* (a spicy lentil dish). Variations of the *dosa (see pp554–5)* are also eaten here with coconut chutney and potatoes.

COASTAL FARE

Along the Konkan Coast, coconuts, cashew nuts and fresh vegetables are in abundance. However, seafood predominates and the types of fish available range from the flat pomfret, salmon *(rawas)* and mackerel to prawns, lobsters and clams. Fish is grilled, fried or cooked as curries with fresh coconut and spices. *Kokum*



Selection of seafood available along the Arabian Sea coastline

LOCAL DISHES AND SPECIALITIES

Cashew nuts

The culinary choices in this region are varied and range from stalls selling spicy savouries, such as *bhelpuri, panipuri* and *pav-bhaji*, to beach shacks and specialist restaurants. Tastes are eclectic and reflect flavours imported from as far off as Iran (Parsi) and Portugal (Goa). Karnataka's and Maharashtra's vegetarian food is complemented by the fish, pork and chicken dishes from the Konkan Coast, Goa, Mangalore and Coorg. This fertile region yields fruits, such as *chikoo* (sapodilla plum) custard apple, mango, papaya and grapes, as well as crops such as sugarcane and cashew, and spices, particularly pepper. During the mild winters in south Maharashtra, jaggery is made, and with it, a peanut or sesame toffee *(chikki)*.

Akuri, *spicy scrambled eggs cooked with tomatoes and onions and garnished with coriander, is a Parsi delicacy.*

Fishermen unloading the catch of the day, Goa

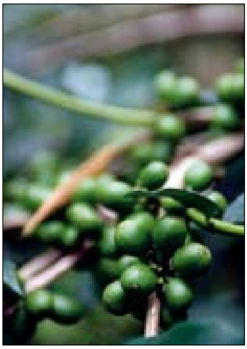
(a dried sour plum), tamarind, raw mango or the local Goan vinegar are used as souring agents. *Kokum* and coconut milk are also used to make a drink, *sol kadhi*.

Although the coastal area has several culinary features in common, particularly in the preparation of seafood, Goa's cuisine is different as it combines Portuguese and local flavours. Some typical dishes include *peixe a Portuguese* (a fish curry with olive oil) and *ambot-tik* (a tangy fish curry with tamarind). Goan chillies are famed for their colour and are used to make the *recheio masala*, which is added to fish, pork and mutton curries.

Malvan fish dishes are equally tasty, especially the *mori chi aamti* (a spicy shark curry) and *bangda* (whole mackerel fried with spices).

OTHER FAVOURITES

The cuisine of the Parsis of Mumbai reflects their Persian ancestory. Their food is mainly non-vegetarian and includes *patra ni machhi* (fish steamed in a banana leaf), *jardaloo sali boti* (mutton with apricots), and the popular *dhan sak* (a meat and lentil casserole).



Coffee berries from a plantation in Coorg, Karnataka

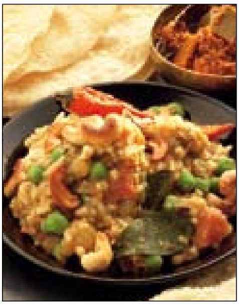
The Kodavas of Coorg have a distinct culture and cuisine and are the only Hindu community that allows non-vegetarian food and alcohol to be served at weddings. *Pandi* (pork) curry is a favourite and is eaten with steamed rice balls *(kadumbuttu). Koli* curry, a chicken curry, and *bembla* curry, made from bamboo shoots, are other specialities, as are their wonderful rice preparations, such as *noolputtu* (rice noodles) or *oduputtu* (rice pancakes), enjoyed by other communities too.

ON THE MENU

Amti	Sweet and sour lentils.
Balachão	Prawns or chicken cooked with pickling spices.
Bebinca	A multi-layered cake.
Kesari bhath	Sweet made of semolina, sugar and saffron.
Kolhapuri mutton	Mutton with chillies, coconut, aniseed and poppy seed.
Moru kolumbu	Vegetables in a yoghurt sauce.
Patra ni macchi	Fish with a coriander-coconut chutney, steamed in banana leaves.
Suran	Steamed yam garnished with dry red chillies and curry leaves.

Vindaloo *a dish of pork cooked in a marinade of vinegar, red chillies and other spices, is Goa's signature dish.*

Fugad *is finely sliced, stir fried cabbage garnished with coconut and chillies. Beans can also be used.*



Bisibele huliyana, *a preparation of lentils, rice and vegetables, is a one-dish meal from Karnataka.*

MUMBAI

Mumbai (formerly Bombay), capital of Maharashtra, is India's most dynamic, cosmopolitan and crowded city. The country's financial centre and its busiest port, Mumbai is also home to the world's biggest cinema industry, popularly known as Bollywood. Some 15 million people, from billionaire tycoons to homeless pavement dwellers, live in this teeming megalopolis.

Consisting of seven swampy islands when the Portuguese acquired it in 1534, Bombay (from the Portuguese Bom Bahia or "Good Bay") came to the British Crown in 1661 as part of the dowry of Catherine of Braganza when she married Charles II. Finding little use for the islands, the British then leased them for a pittance to the East India Company, which quickly realized their potential as an excellent natural harbour in the Arabian Sea. By the 18th century, Bombay had become the major city and shipbuilding yard on the western coast, and by the 19th century land reclamations had joined the islands into the narrow promontory that it is today. The promise of commercial opportunities lured communities of Gujaratis, Parsis *(see p447)* and Baghdadi or Sephardic Jews to settle in Bombay, giving the city its vibrant multicultural identity. The city has now reverted to its local name, Mumbai, from Mumba Devi, the eight-armed goddess worshipped by the Koli fishermen who were the islands' original inhabitants.

Mumbai is a city of striking contrasts. Here skyscrapers stand next to stately Victorian buildings, noisy traditional bazaars adjoin glittering new shopping malls, and opulent neighbourhoods are surrounded by sprawling slums. Swelling Mumbai's population and stretching its suburban environs are migrants from all over the country who continue to flock to this "city of gold", in search of fame, fortune, or just a bit part in a Bollywood movie.

Swirling traffic around Flora Fountain in the heart of Mumbai

◁ **The Gateway of India, Mumbai's signature landmark, on the shores of the Arabian Sea**

Exploring Mumbai

Mumbai is a long, narrow promontory covering 430 sq km (166 sq miles), which juts into the Arabian Sea. Its downtown is the historic Fort area in South Mumbai, that derives its name from earlier colonial fortifications. This is the city's nerve centre, with the best known sights, hotels and restaurants. The posh residential area of Malabar Hill lies along the western coastline, just north of Marine Drive. Suburban Mumbai, with its sprawling new developments, stretches northwards from Bandra.

Fishing boats, decorated for Holi, at the seafront in South Mumbai

SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

Historic Buildings, Streets & Neighbourhoods

Ballard Estate ⑬
Bandra ㉑
Colaba Causeway ③
Flora Fountain ⑨
Gateway of India ①
General Post Office ⑭
Horniman Circle ⑦
Kala Ghoda pp448–9 ④
Khotachiwadi ⑱
Malabar Hill ⑯
Marine Drive ⑮
Mumbai Stock Exchange ⑧
Shahid Bhagat Singh Marg ⑫
Town Hall ⑥
Victoria Terminus pp454–5 ⑩
Wellington Fountain ②

Historic Sites

Elephanta Island ㉕

Museums

The Prince of Wales Museum pp450–51 ⑤

Temples & Mosques

Banganga ⑰
Haji Ali Mosque ⑳
Mahalaxmi Temple ⑲

Beaches & Parks

Juhu Beach ㉒
Sanjay Gandhi National Park ㉔

Shops & Markets

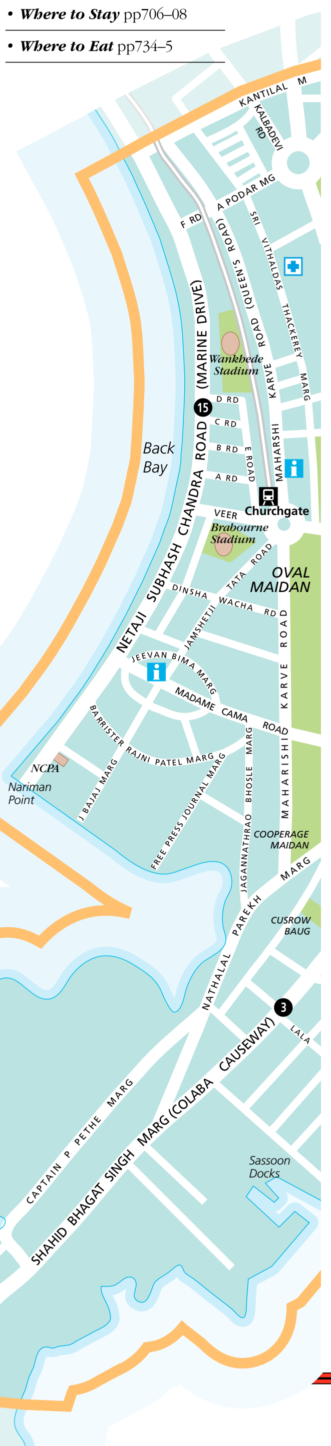
Crawford Market ⑪

Entertainment

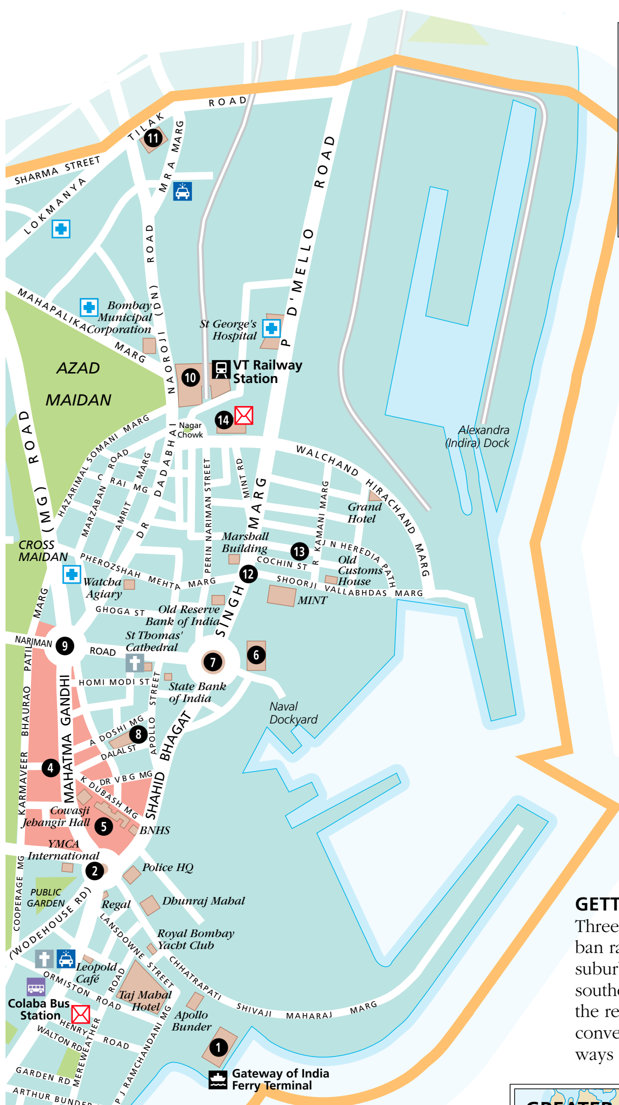
Film City ㉓

SEE ALSO

- ***Where to Stay*** pp706–08
- ***Where to Eat*** pp734–5



KANTILAL M
KALBADEVI RD
A PODAR MG
F RD
SRI VITHALDAS THACKEREY MARG
ROAD (QUEEN'S ROAD)
(MARINE DRIVE)
Wankhede Stadium
KARVE
D RD
C RD
B RD
A RD
E ROAD
MAHARSHI
⑮
Back Bay
NETAJI SUBHASH CHANDRA ROAD
VEER
Churchgate
Brabourne Stadium
TATA ROAD
OVAL MAIDAN
DINSHA WACHA RD
JAMSHETJI
ROAD
KARVE
JEEVAN BIMA MARG
MADAME CAMA ROAD
BARRISTER RAJNI PATEL MARG
NCPA
Nariman Point
J BAJAJ MARG
FREE PRESS JOURNAL MARG
MAHARSHI
BHOSLE MARG
JAGANNATHRAO
COOPERAGE MAIDAN
MARG
PAREKH
CUSROW BAUG
NATHALAL
③
LALA
SHAHID BHAGAT SINGH MARG (COLABA CAUSEWAY)
CAPTAIN P PETHE MARG
Sassoon Docks
CUFFE PARADE
CAPTAIN P PETHE MARG
HOMI BHABHA ROAD


TILAK ROAD
SHARMA STREET
LOKMANYA
11
M R A MARG
ROAD
D'MELLO ROAD
P
Bombay Municipal Corporation
MAHAPALIKA MARG
DADABHAI NAOROJI (D N) ROAD
St George's Hospital
VT Railway Station
10
14
Nagar Chowk
AZAD MAIDAN
ROAD (MG)
SOMANI MARG
HAZARIMAL
MARZABAN
AMRIT RAI MG
C ROAD
DR
WALCHAND HIRACHAND MARG
Grand Hotel
MINT RD
PERIN NARIMAN STREET
Marshall Building
KAMANI MARG
J N HEREDIA PATH
13
COCHIN ST
Old Customs House
SHOORJI VALLABHDAS MARG
MINT
12
CROSS MAIDAN
PHEROZSHAH MEHTA MARG
Watcha Agiary
GHOGA ST
Old Reserve Bank of India
SINGH
St Thomas' Cathedral
NARIMAN
ROAD
9
7
6
HOMI MODI ST
State Bank of India
Naval Dockyard
Alexandra (Indira) Dock
MARG
PATIL
BHAURAO
MAHATMA GANDHI
A DOSHI MG
8
DALAL ST
APOLLO STREET
SHAHID BHAGAT
4
KARMAVEER
K DUBASH MG
DR V B G MG
Cowasji Jehangir Hall
5
BNHS
YMCA International
2
Police HQ
COOPERAGE MG
PUBLIC GARDEN
(WODEHOUSE RD)
Regal
Dhunraj Mahal
LANSDOWNE STREET
Royal Bombay Yacht Club
CHHATRAPATI SHIVAJI MAHARAJ MARG
Leopold Café
ORMISTON ROAD
ROAD
Taj Mahal Hotel
Colaba Bus Station
HENRY RD
MEREWEATHER ROAD
Apollo Bunder
WALTON RD
GARDEN RD
RAMCHANDANI MG
1
Gateway of India Ferry Terminal
ARTHUR BUNDER RD
P J
Colaba Market
NIGAM ST
0 metres 400
0 yards 400

LOCATOR MAP

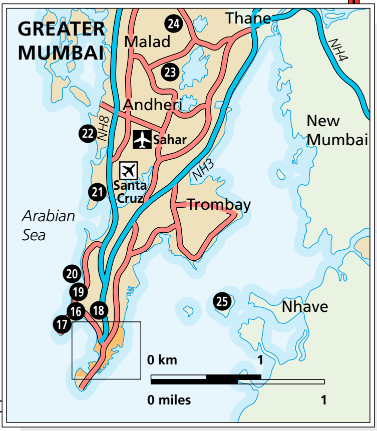
KEY

- 🟥 Street-by-Street area: *see pp448–9*
- ✈ International airport
- ✈ Domestic airport
- Railway station
- Bus station
- Ferry port
- ℹ Tourist information
- ✚ Hospital
- Police station
- ☒ Post office
- ✝ Church
- National highway
- Major road

GETTING AROUND

Three punctual, if crowded, suburban railway lines link the northern suburbs to the city centre and the southern tip. A private car, taxi, or the red BEST buses are all convenient and reasonably priced ways to get around within the city.

Doubledecker bus at Victoria Terminus ***(see pp454–5)***

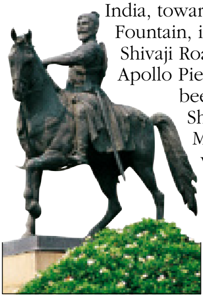

GREATER MUMBAI
Malad
24
Thane
NH4
23
Andheri
22
NH8
Sahar
New Mumbai
Santa Cruz
21
NH3
Trombay
Arabian Sea
20
19
16
18
17
25
Nhave
0 km 1
0 miles 1

The Gateway of India with the red-domed Taj Mahal Hotel behind it

Gateway of India ❶

Apollo Bunder, Chhatrapati Shivaji Marg & PJ Ramchandani Marg.

Mumbai's most famous landmark, the Gateway of India, was the first sight to greet travellers to Indian shores during the heyday of the British Raj. Ironically, it also became the exit point for British troops after India gained independence in 1947. It was built to commemorate the visit of King George V and Queen Mary in 1911, en route to the Delhi Durbar, but in fact, the King and Queen were met with a mock cardboard and pastiche structure – the actual Triumphal Arch, built in honey coloured basalt, was only completed in 1924, years after the royal visit. This monumental structure with two large reception halls, arches and minarets, and embellishments inspired by medieval Gujarati architecture, was designed by the Scottish architect George Wittet, and commands a spectacular view of the sea. The Gateway looks particularly impressive at night when it is illuminated, with the inky black sea stretching into the horizon beyond it. This is the heart of Mumbai's tourist district, the city's most popular gathering place, and always teems with locals, visitors, vendors and boatmen. Boats and barges moored here provide regular services across the bay and to islands such as Elephanta *(see p461)*. They can also be hired for leisurely trips down the Mumbai coastline.



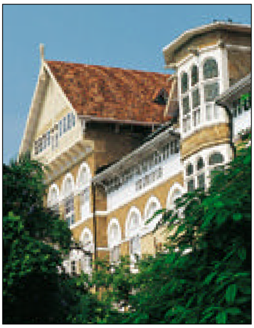
Statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji opposite the Gateway

North of the Gateway of India, towards Wellington Fountain, is Chhatrapati Shivaji Road. Formerly Apollo Pier Road, it has now been renamed after Shivaji *(see p471)*, Maharashtra's great warrior-hero. Shivaji's equestrian statue is placed here in a pleasant garden, in line with the Gateway. Standing nearby is another statue, that of the great 19th-century Hindu philosopher and reformist, Swami Vivekananda *(see p615)*.

Around the Gateway are some majestic buildings dating from the colonial era. These include the old **Yacht Club** which now houses the offices of the Atomic Energy Commission (entry restricted), the **Royal Bombay Yacht Club**, originally built as a residential annexe to the Old Yacht Club, and the **Taj Mahal Hotel** *(see p708)*, behind which lies the busy Colaba Causeway.

The stately, red-domed Taj Mahal Hotel was built in 1903 by a prominent Parsi industrialist, Jamshedji Tata *(see p225)* who, it is said, decided to construct this magnificent hotel when he was barred from entering the "Whites Only" Watsons Hotel. The Taj, with its splendid Moorish arches and columns, majestic stairways and galleries, remains one of Asia's grandest hotels, while Watsons is now a dilapidated building, the hotel having closed down long ago.

The eastern sea face stretching in front of the Gateway of India is Mumbai's favourite promenade. Called **Apollo Bunder**, it was once the traditional dockyard of the local Koli fishermen, the islands' original inhabitants. Today, snake charmers and performing monkeys, astrologers and ear-cleaners hustle for business among the strollers. Dozens of yachts, fishing boats and ferries are moored in the waters beyond.



The Royal Bombay Yacht Club, a relic of the British Raj

The entrance to Cusrow Baug, a Parsi enclave along Colaba

Wellington Fountain ❷

Bounded by MG Rd, Shahid Bhagat Singh Marg, Chhatrapati Shivaji Marg & Madame Cama Rd.

Built to commemorate the Duke of Wellington's visit to Bombay in 1801, Wellington Fountain (now renamed Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Chowk) is encircled by some magnificent colonial buildings. These include the old **Majestic Hotel** (now the government-owned Sahakari Bhandar) with its mock minarets and Gujarati balconies, and the elegant Art Deco **Regal Cinema**, designed by Charles Stevens and completed in 1934. His father, Frederick William Stevens, designed the imposing grey stone Indo-Gothic **Sailors' Home**, with a bas-relief of Neptune on its front gable, in 1876; it is now the Police Headquarters. Equally impressive are the Edwardian Cowasjee Jehangir Hall, now the **National Gallery of Modern Art** *(see p449)*, and the Indo-Saracenic **Prince of Wales Museum** *(see pp450–51)*. Adjoining it is Hornbill House, the headquarters of the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), a prestigious institution established in 1883.

Colaba Causeway ❸

Shahid Bhagat Singh Marg. **Afghan Memorial Church** ○ *daily.* ✝ *7am & 4:30pm, Sun.*

Constructed by the British in 1838, Colaba Causeway helped integrate the main city with Colaba, its southernmost spur. Today, the Causeway, also known as Shahid Bhagat Singh Road *(see p456)*, is a lively mix of shops, restaurants and residential enclaves. Among them is the charming Parsi housing colony of **Cusrow Baug**, built in the 1930s, where the distinct culture and lifestyle of this dwindling community is preserved. Of the Causeway's many restaurants is one that has become an institution, the **Leopold Café and Bar** *(see p735)*, established in 1871, and a popular meeting place ever since. Further south are the **Sassoon Docks**, worth visiting early in the morning when they are buzzing with activity. This is when the fishermen bring in their catch and a wholesale fish market is set up by the lively, sharp-tongued Koli fishwives.

At the southern end of Colaba is the **Afghan Memorial Church of St John the Evangelist**, built between 1847 and 1858 *(see p21)*. This grand Neo-Gothic structure with its tall spire and imposing front porch in buff basalt stone, was built in memory of the soldiers who died in the First Afghan War (1843), and the church is full of poignant memorial stones. It has superb stained glass, especially on its west windows, where an outstanding panel depicts the Crucifixion. A memorial to the martyrs stands in the garden.

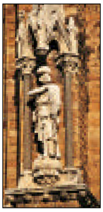
Fishermen bringing in the day's catch at Sassoon Docks

THE PARSI COMMUNITY IN MUMBAI

Conductor Zubin Mehta, a Mumbai-born Parsi

Mumbai's cosmopolitan, progressive culture owes a great deal to the contribution of the Parsi community. Originally from Iran, where they followed the ancient Zoroastrian faith, they migrated to India in the 9th century AD when the advent of Islam brought with it the religious persecution of Zoroastrians. They settled along the west coast of Gujarat, absorbing many local traditions, and later moved to Mumbai where they made their name as brilliant financiers and traders. Often, they adopted the name of their trade, and so one finds Parsi surnames such as Mistry (mason) and Vakil (lawyer), or even Readymoney! A wealthy and talented community that has produced several leading industrial houses, such as the Tatas and the Godrejs, Parsis are also renowned for their philanthropy and have founded several cultural, educational and medical institutions in Mumbai.

Street-by-Street: Kala Ghoda ❹

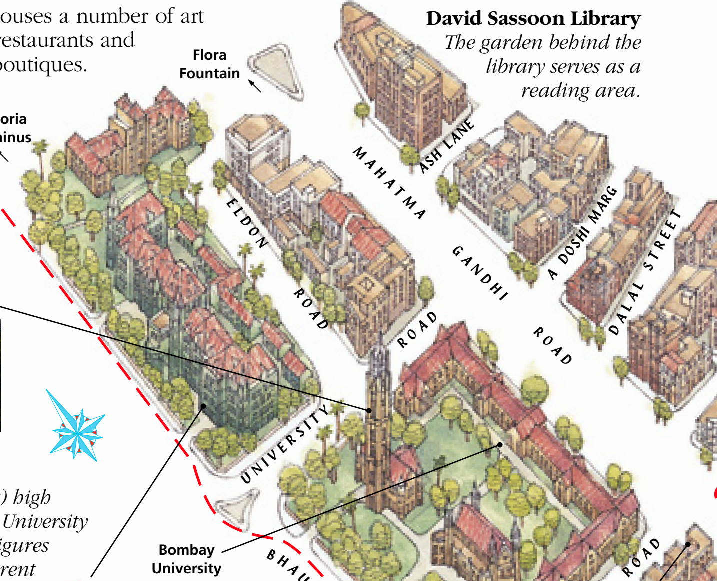


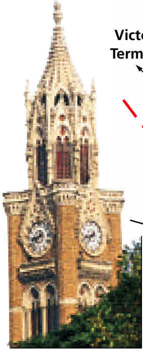
Detail, Clock Tower

Kala Ghoda, or "Black Horse", takes its name from an equestrian statue of King Edward VII that once stood at the intersection of Mahatma Gandhi Road and K Dubash Marg. The statue has long since been removed, but the name persists in public memory. Stretching from Wellington Fountain at the southern end of Mahatma Gandhi Road, to Bombay University at the north, and flanked by the Oval Maidan and the naval base at Lion Gate, this historic area is a hub of cultural activity. It also houses a number of art galleries, cafés, restaurants and fine shops and boutiques.

David Sassoon Library

The garden behind the library serves as a reading area.


Flora Fountain
Victoria Terminus
ASH LANE
MAHATMA GANDHI ROAD
ELDON ROAD
A DOSHI MARG
DALAL STREET
UNIVERSITY ROAD
Bombay University complex
BHAURAO PATIL MARG
A S D'MELLO ROAD
Old Secretariat



★ Rajabai Clock Tower

This 78-m (256-ft) high tower in Bombay University is adorned with figures representing different Indian communities.

★ High Court

This fortress-like building, the second largest public building in the city, has a grand central staircase, well-appointed court rooms, and a large library.

Esplanade Mansion, formerly Watsons Hotel, witnessed the city's first motion picture in 1896.

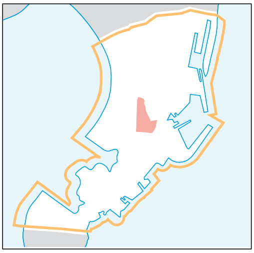
STAR SIGHTS

- ★ Rajabai Clock Tower
- ★ High Court
- ★ Prince of Wales Museum

Army & Navy Building

The Neo-Classical Army & Navy Building, a departmental store in the early 1900s, is home to several offices of the Tata Group.

Kenneseth Eliyahoo Synagogue
This is the oldest Sephardic synagogue in the city, donated by the Sassoon family. It is used for prayer by Mumbai's Baghdadi and Bene Israeli Jewish community.

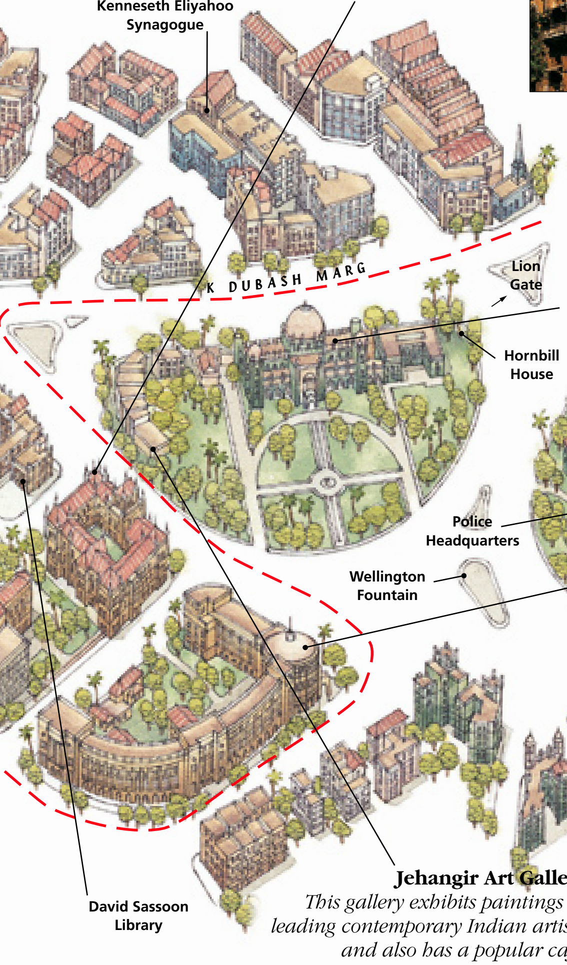


LOCATOR MAP
See Mumbai Map pp444–5

KEY

▬ ▬ Suggested route

Elphinstone College
Part of this delightful Venetian Gothic building houses the State Archives.


0 metres 50
0 yards 50
Kenneseth Eliyahoo Synagogue
K DUBASH MARG
Lion Gate
Hornbill House
Police Headquarters
Wellington Fountain
Gateway of India
Regal Cinema
David Sassoon Library

★ Prince of Wales Museum
Mumbai's most prestigious museum has a good collection of Rajput miniatures and sculptures (see pp450–51).

The National Gallery of Modern Art, an Edwardian building, has the most impressive exhibition space in Mumbai.

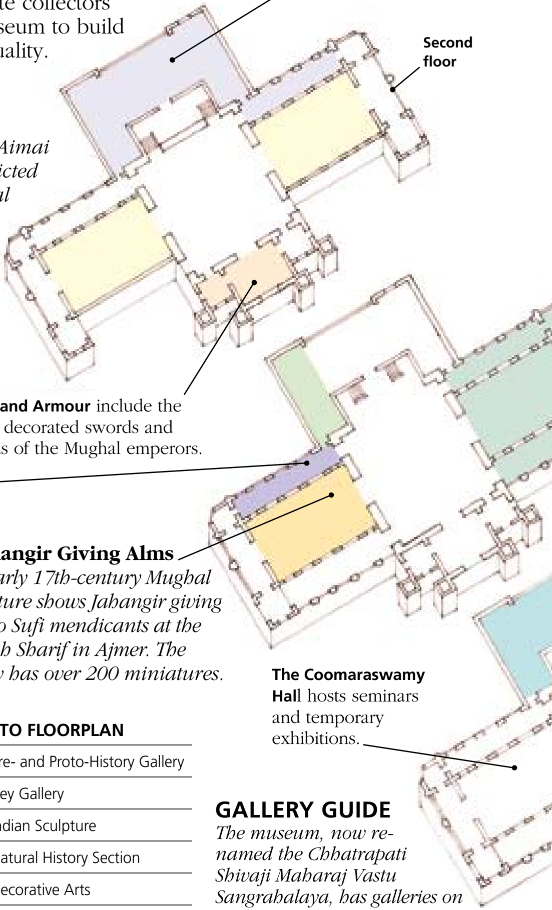
Jehangir Art Gallery
This gallery exhibits paintings by leading contemporary Indian artists, and also has a popular café.

The Prince of Wales Museum ❺

Damascened sword, Mysore, 1732

Especially renowned for its superb sculptures and miniature paintings, the Prince of Wales Museum's exhibits are housed in a grand Indo-Saracenic building, designed by George Wittet. Its foundation stone was laid by the Prince of Wales (the future George V) in 1905. During World War I, it served as a military hospital, and was formally inaugurated in 1923. Generous gifts from discerning private collectors have enabled the museum to build a collection of rare quality.

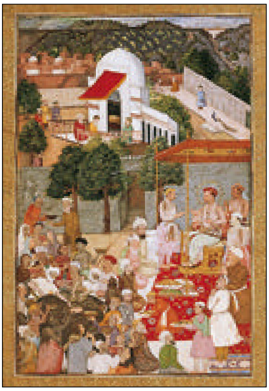
Japanese Cloisonné
This 19th-century vase forms part of an impressive collection of Far Eastern art.



Arms and Armour include the finely decorated swords and shields of the Mughal emperors.

The Coomaraswamy Hall hosts seminars and temporary exhibitions.

Ivory Statuette
A Parsi girl, Bai Aimai Wadia, is depicted in traditional dress in this 19th-century piece from the Decorative Arts gallery.



★ Jahangir Giving Alms
This early 17th-century Mughal miniature shows Jahangir giving alms to Sufi mendicants at the Dargah Sharif in Ajmer. The gallery has over 200 miniatures.

KEY TO FLOORPLAN

- 🟦 Pre- and Proto-History Gallery
- 🟧 Key Gallery
- 🟥 Indian Sculpture
- ⬜ Natural History Section
- 🟪 Decorative Arts
- 🟨 Miniature Paintings
- 🟩 Bronzes
- 🟩 Nepalese and Tibetan Art
- 🟦 Maritime History
- 🟨 European Paintings
- 🟪 Far Eastern Art
- 🟧 Arms and Armour
- 🟫 Premchand Roychand Gallery

GALLERY GUIDE

The museum, now renamed the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, has galleries on three floors. The ground floor houses sculpture (including Gandhara masterpieces), the Pre- and Proto-History Gallery, and the Natural History Section. On the first floor are miniature paintings, decorative arts, Nepalese and Tibetan Art, and the newly opened Premchand Roychand Galleries. The second floor has European paintings, arms and armour.

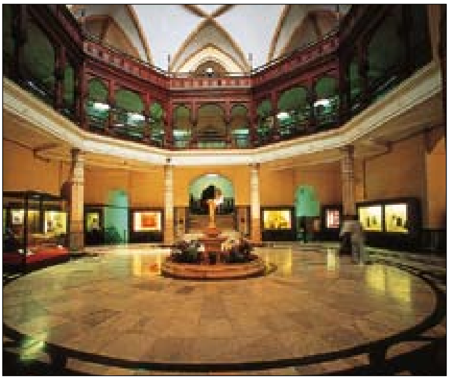
STAR EXHIBITS

- ★ Jahangir Giving Alms
- ★ Maitreya Buddha
- ★ Gandhara Sculpture

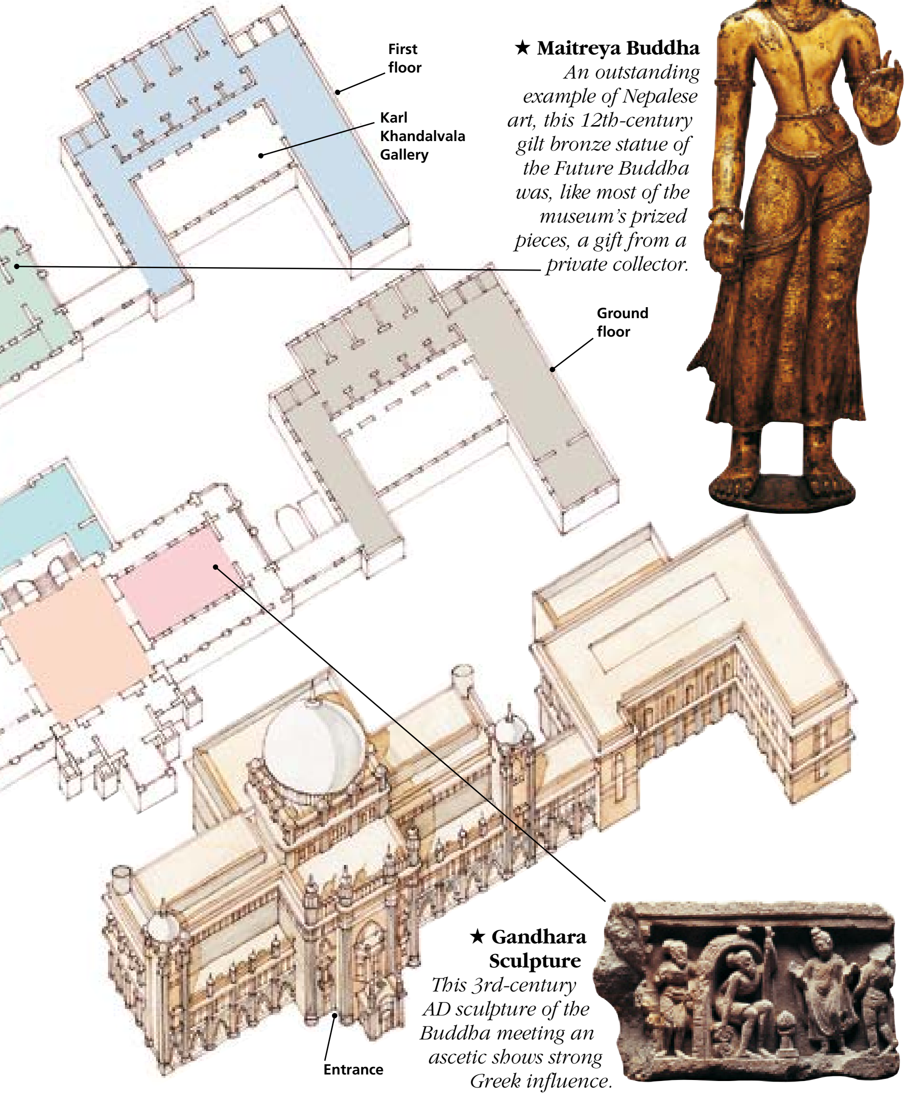
For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp706–8 and pp734–5

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

MG Rd, Fort Area. ***Tel*** *(022) 2284 4519.* ○ *Tue–Sun.* *Students with an International ID card get a discount.*



Key Gallery
The central hall on the ground floor offers a sampling of the museum's treasures, with prize exhibits from different galleries.



★ Maitreya Buddha
An outstanding example of Nepalese art, this 12th-century gilt bronze statue of the Future Buddha was, like most of the museum's prized pieces, a gift from a private collector.

★ Gandhara Sculpture
This 3rd-century AD sculpture of the Buddha meeting an ascetic shows strong Greek influence.

The Town Hall, Mumbai's most elegant public building

Town Hall ❻

Shahid Bhagat Singh Marg, Fort Area. ***Tel*** *(022) 2266 0956.* ○ *Mon–Sat.* ● *public hols.* **The Asiatic Society** ***Tel*** *(022) 2266 0956.* ○ *Mon–Sat.*

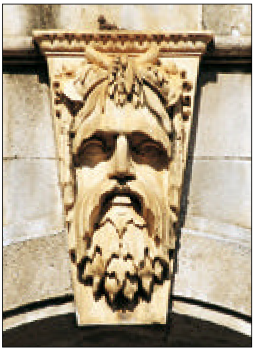
In recognition of Mumbai's importance as a burgeoning commercial centre in the 19th century, the city was bestowed with a Town Hall, facing the vast open space of Cotton Green (now Horniman Circle). Designed by Colonel Thomas Cowper and completed in 1833, the Town Hall is considered to be among the finest Neo-Classical buildings in India, and is one of the earliest surviving colonial buildings in Mumbai. Its impressive façade of pedimented porticoes surmounts a row of fluted Doric columns, which were shipped out from England. A grand flight of steps leads into a magnificent Assembly Hall, the venue for public meetings during the Raj.

The Town Hall's north wing houses **The Asiatic Society**, founded in 1804, with its imposing high ceiling, teak-panelled walls, and elegant cast iron balustrades. This institution's extensive library has a priceless collection of 800,000 volumes, including a first edition of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, ancient Sanskrit manuscripts and old Bombay gazetteers. On the first floor are marble statues of Mumbai's founding fathers, among them two governors, Mountstuart Elphinstone and Sir Bartle Frere, and the Parsi philanthropist, Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy.

Horniman Circle ❼

Veer Nariman Rd, Fort Area. **St Thomas' Cathedral** ***Tel*** *(022) 2202 0121.* ○ *daily.* ✝ *8am & 4:30pm, Sun.*

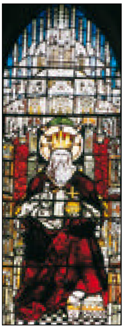
The central green, the old Cotton Green where traders used to buy and sell bales of cotton, was laid out as a public garden in 1869. Later known as Elphinstone Circle, it was renamed after Independence in honour of Benjamin Guy Horniman, a former editor of the *Bombay Chronicle* who was an active supporter of India's Freedom Movement. Today, the garden remains a delightful spot, much frequented by students and office workers who relax here before the long commute back to their homes in the distant suburbs. The garden is also the venue for open-air theatrical performances and cultural events in the winter.



Greek-inspired keystone at Horniman Circle

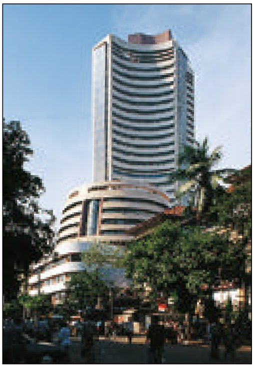
The elegant circle of Neo-Classical buildings around the garden was built in the 1860s, and fashioned after acclaimed English examples such as Bath Crescent and Tunbridge Wells. Designed by James Scott, the buildings around the garden share a uniform façade with pedestrian arcades and decorative terracotta keystones from England, and represent the earliest planned urban compositions in Mumbai.

Anchoring the western edge of the flower-filled green patch of Horniman Circle is **St Thomas' Cathedral**, the city's oldest church, which was consecrated in 1718. Like many of Mumbai's great edifices, this too was funded by public donations, collected in large part by a young East India Company chaplain named Richard Cobbe. The church has an imposing bell tower and flying buttresses, and some fine 19th-century stained glass. The cathedral's spacious interior is especially remarkable for its splendid marble memorials to heroes of the Raj. An exceptionally fine one is the monument to Governor Duncan, which depicts him being blessed by Hindus for his efforts to stop infanticide. In front of the entrance porch is a charming Neo-Gothic fountain. Designed by Sir Gilbert Scott, it was donated by the Parsi financier, Sir Cowasjee Readymoney.



Stained glass, St Thomas' Cathedral

Opposite the Cathedral are some lovely buildings – the Neo-Gothic **Elphinstone Building**, built in the late 19th century, and the Neo-Classical **British Bank of the Middle East**. Across the road is the **Readymoney Mansion** with its detailed timberwork, carved balconies, and Mughal arches. Reminiscent of a Rajasthani *haveli*, it was also designed by George Wittet *(see p450).*



The Mumbai Stock Exchange, India's financial epicentre

Mumbai Stock Exchange ❽

Dalal Street, Fort Area. ● *to public.*

India's financial epicentre, the **Mumbai Stock Exchange** towers above Dalal Street. This is Mumbai's Wall Street and derives its name from the many stockbrokers *(dalals)* in the area. The presence of close to 50 banks on a short stretch underlines the frenetic pace of its commercial activity. Just before lunchtime, the area swarms with *dabbawallahs (see p457)* who bring home-made lunchboxes to the thousands of office workers in the area.

Flora Fountain ❾

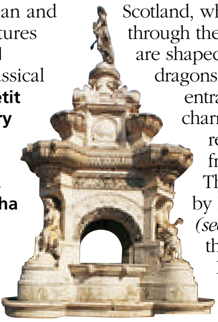
Junction of Veer Nariman Rd, MG Rd & Dr Dadabhai Naoroji Rd, Fort Area.

Standing at the intersection of three major streets is **Flora Fountain**, the quintessential icon of Mumbai. Crafted out of Portland stone and shipped out from England, the fountain is surmounted by the Roman goddess Flora who stands above exuberantly carved seashells, dolphins and mythical beasts. Erected in 1869 in what was then a spacious open plaza, Flora Fountainis now swamped in a sea of traffic, and overshadowed by a **Martyrs' Memorial** put up by the Maharashtra state government in 1960. The area has now been renamed Hutatma Chowk ("Martyrs' Square"). This area marks the western ramparts of the now-vanished old Fort, built by the East India Company in 1716, which covered the southern part of the city. The Fort was demolished in the 1860s by the governor, Sir Bartle Frere, to allow the city to expand, and to accommodate the grandiose new civic and commercial buildings he had planned. All these buildings were designed with pedestrian arcades, which today are crowded with hawkers selling a wide range of goods, from old books to clothes and electronic gadgets.

North of Flora Fountain, leading towards Victoria Terminus, is Dadabhai Naoroji (DN) Road, lined with some magnificent Victorian and later colonial structures such as the **Capitol Cinema** with its classical detailing, the **JN Petit Institute and Library** (1898) with its Venetian Neo-Gothic façade, and the Art Deco **Watcha Agiary** (Parsi Fire Temple) with its Assyrian-style carvings, built in 1881. Other interesting structures include the Indo-Saracenic **Times of India Building** and the fanciful **Municipal Corporation Building**, with its Islamic minarets, Gothic towers and onion domes.

Victoria Terminus ❿

See pp454–5.



Flora Fountain, a favourite Mumbai landmark

Crawford Market ⓫

Dr Dadabhai Naoroji Rd & Lokmanya Tilak Rd. **Shops** ○ *daily.*

One of Mumbai's most fascinating and lively areas, Crawford Market, now renamed Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Market, lies to the north of Victoria Terminus. Designed by William Emerson and completed in 1869, this architectural extravaganza of Moorish arches and half-timbered gables, topped by a clocktower, consists of a large central hall with two wings. Tiers of wooden stalls display nearly 3,000 tonnes of fresh produce daily, from fruit and flowers to fish and exotic birds. The floor is paved with stone from Caithness in Scotland, which remains cool through the day. The lamps are shaped like winged dragons. Above the entrance doors, the charming marble bas-reliefs depict scenes from market life. They were carved by Lockwood Kipling *(see p110)*, father of the writer Rudyard Kipling, as was the fountain in the courtyard exuberantly decorated with Hindu river goddesses and animals.

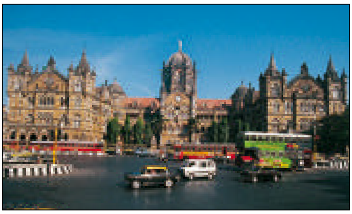
Just west of Crawford Market is **Zaveri Bazaar**, where diamond, gold and silver merchants have their opulent stores. Northwest of Crawford Market, on Mutton Street, is **Chor Bazaar** ("Thieves' Market"), with its fascinating antique and bric-a-brac shops.

Vegetable stall at Crawford Market

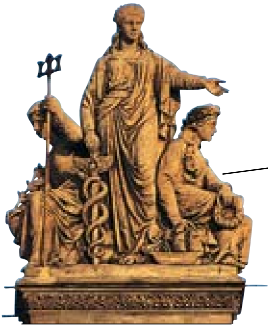
Victoria Terminus ⑩

Central Railway emblem on the gate

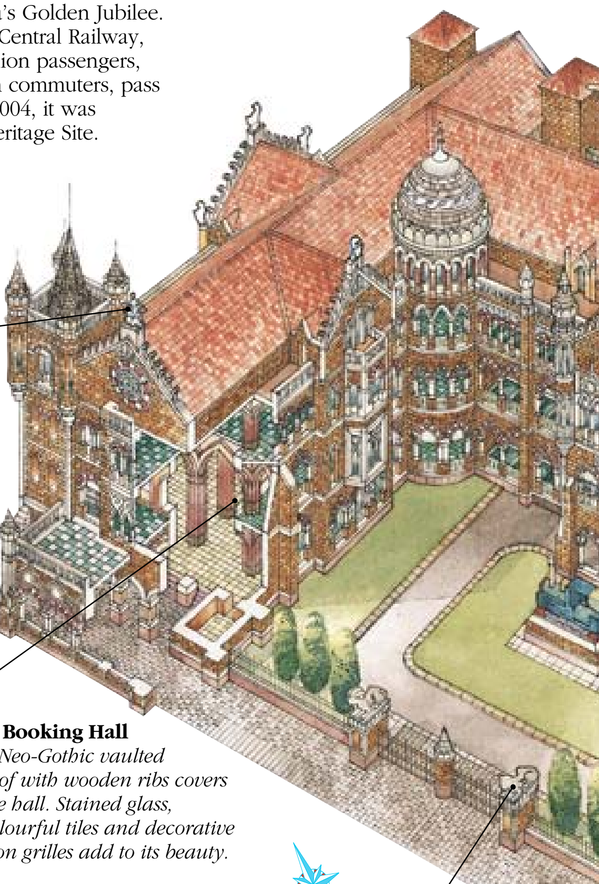
The most impressive example of Victorian Gothic architecture in India, Victoria Terminus Railway Station (now renamed Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus) is a rich extravaganza of domes, spires and arches. Designed by Frederick William Stevens and decorated by local art students and craftsmen, it was completed in 1888 and named to commemorate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee. Now the headquarters of the Central Railway, over 1,000 trains and two million passengers, including crowds of suburban commuters, pass through the station daily. In 2004, it was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

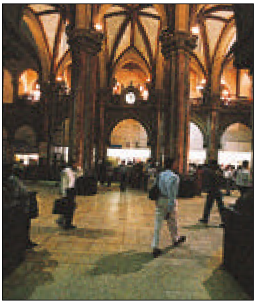


Victoria Terminus, often mistaken for a grand palace or cathedral



The Gables
The gables are crowned by sculptures representing Engineering, Agriculture and Commerce.





★ Booking Hall
A Neo-Gothic vaulted roof with wooden ribs covers the hall. Stained glass, colourful tiles and decorative iron grilles add to its beauty.

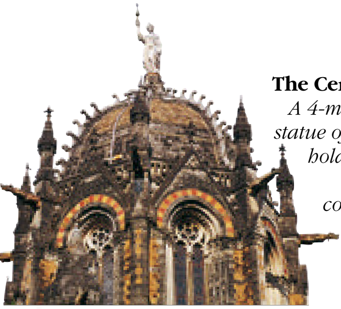
Entrance
The entrance gate piers are topped by stone sculptures of a lion and a tiger, symbolizing Britain and India, respectively.

STAR SIGHTS

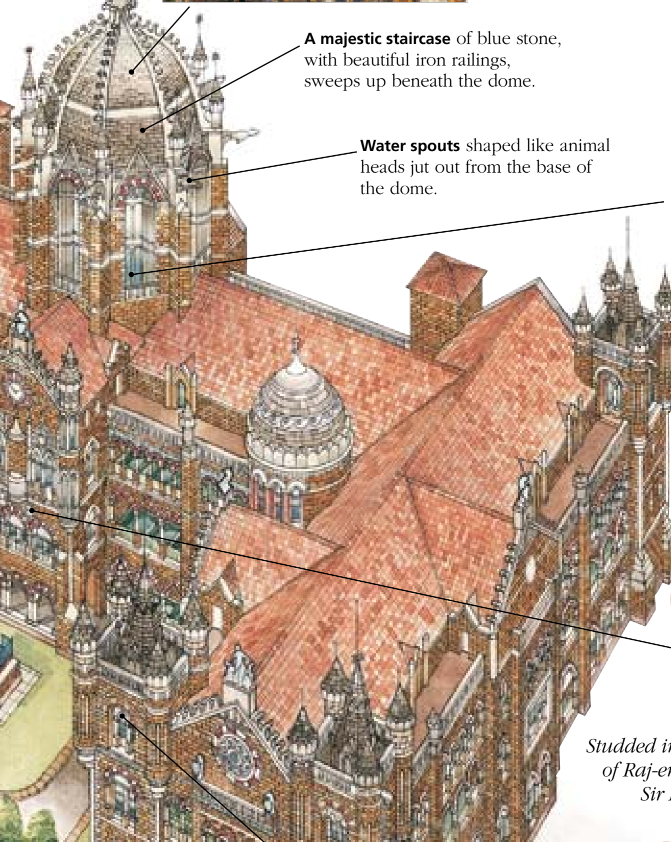
- ★ Booking Hall
- ★ Stone Carvings and Sculptures

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Dr Dadabhai Naoroji Rd, Fort Area. ***Tel*** *(022) 2264 6464*
🚫📷 *of the interiors.* 🍴 🚻 🛍

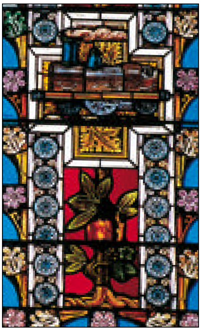


The Central Dome
A 4-m (13-ft) high statue of "Progress", holding a torch, crowns the colossal dome, which has eight decorated ribs.



A majestic staircase of blue stone, with beautiful iron railings, sweeps up beneath the dome.

Water spouts shaped like animal heads jut out from the base of the dome.



Stained Glass
Set into the octagonal tower below the dome are brilliantly coloured stained-glass windows, decorated with a locomotive and foliage.

Portrait Medallion
Studded into the façade are busts of Raj-era personalities, such as Sir Bartle Frere (see p452).

★ Stone Carvings and Sculptures
An exquisite peacock carving decorates this window. Other carved screens and friezes feature elephants, monkeys and snakes.

The Ruttonsee Mulji fountain, elaborately carved and embellished

Shahid Bhagat Singh Marg ⑫

Fort Area.

This busy street, also known as Colaba Causeway *(see p447)* towards its southern end, is the bustling commercial and administrative hub of the so-called Fort area *(see p453)*. Virtually no traces of this historic structure remain, but the area still offers a fascinating glimpse into the continuities between colonial and present-day Mumbai.

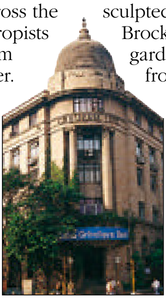
The **Reserve Bank of India**, which stands on the site of an old military barracks, is India's leading banking institution. Built in 1939 and designed by JA Ritchie, its grand Art Deco entrance, flanked by two impressive columns, enhances its air of respectable solidity. There are attractive cast iron grilles in the window panels. The new highrise offices of the Reserve Bank, across the road, stand in the grounds of the old **Mint**. This is a majestic Classical-fronted building, built in 1817 by Major John Hawkins, a member of the Bombay Engineers' Regiment. Entry into the Mint is restricted, but visible from its compound is a stone gateway erected by the Portuguese, now inside the naval establishment, INS Angre.

West of the Mint, occupying a corner site at the intersection of Pherozeshah Mehta and Shahid Bhagat Singh roads, is the imposing **Gresham Assurance Building**. This Art Deco structure has an impressive basalt façade, with two grand pillars and a dome.

The **Marshall Building**, directly opposite, has a Florentine dome, and was constructed in 1898 to accommodate the warehouse and offices of a British engineering firm. Its façade, embellished with a medley of angels, portholes and pediments, is a wonderful example of how contemporary European architecture was successfully transplanted to eastern settings.

Drinking water fountains or *pyavs* were set up across the city by local philanthropists to provide respite from the hot Indian summer. At the point where Shahid Bhagat Singh Marg meets Mint Road is the **Ruttonsee Mulji Drinking Water Fountain** designed by FW Stevens, the leading architect of Victorian Bombay, who also designed the Municipal Corporation Building and the Victoria Terminus *(see pp454–5)*. This fountain was erected in 1894 by a local trader, in memory of his only son, whose statue stands beneath the dome. Made of limestone and red and blue granite, it is decorated with projecting elephant heads, whose trunks spout water. The dome, supported by columns made of blue granite, is crowned by the figure of a young boy. The fountain also has a special trough from which animals can drink.

Further down Mint Road, just before its junction with Walchand Hirachand Marg, is another *pyav* and the **Kothari Kabutarkhana**. Literally "Pigeon House", the Kabutarkhana is an ornate stone structure, constructed in the 18th century by a Jain merchant, Purushottamdas Kothari, and added to in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Jains, like Buddhists, believe that all living beings have souls, and that kind acts towards all life forms will earn the giver merit in the next life.



Gresham Assurance Building

At the western end of Walchand Hirachand Marg is **Nagar Chowk**, an oasis of green in the midst of swirling traffic. It has an impressive statue of Sir Dinshaw Manekji Petit, a baronet, captain of industry and leading Parsi philanthropist of the early 20th century. The statue was sculpted by Sir Thomas Brock and the surrounding garden is a good place from which to view some of Mumbai's grand Victorian buildings – among them Victoria Terminus, the Bombay Municipal Corporation building and the General Post Office. Shahid Bhagat Singh Marg eventually runs into D'Mello Road, formerly known as Frere Road. This area lay under water until the 1860s, when it was reclaimed by the Port Trust. Today the road is lined with popular eateries.

Pigeons at the Kothari Kabutarkhana pecking at their daily supply of grain

Ballard Estate ⑬

Bounded by Shahid Bhagat Singh Marg, Walchand Hirachand Marg & Shoorji Vallabhdas Marg.

This entire area was once part of the sea until it was reclaimed by the Bombay Port Trust and converted into a business district. Planned between 1908 and 1914 by George Wittet, architect of the Gateway of India, the area was developed according to the strict guidelines he set, maintaining a restrained elegance in contrast to the over-ornamentation of the Victorian edifices in the Fort area. The district's broad pavements and neat tree-lined avenues are lined with stone buildings of uniform height and style, giving the Estate an atmosphere of calm tranquillity, unusual in a business quarter.

A convenient point of entry into Ballard Estate is from Shoorji Vallabhdas Marg, near the imposing Marshall Building. Among the most impressive buildings on this street is the **Customs House**. Designed by Wittet himself, it has a grand entrance portico in stately Renaissance style, framed by two columns rising to the height of the building. Next to it is the **Bombay Port Trust** also designed by George Wittet. Two striking ships in full sail are sculpted on its basalt façade. Further down the road, to the east, is the **Port Trust War Memorial**, honouring the memory of port officers who died in World War I. The memorial has a single, fluted column shaft in stone, surmounted by a lantern. The **Grand Hotel** dominates the corner of Walchand Hirachand Marg and Ram Gulam Marg. Another of George Wittet's designs, it has a striking central atrium. The grandiose **Mackinnon & Mackenzie Building** has an impressive portico, columns and statues. This, and other beautiful Edwardian buildings, such as **Darabshaw House** and **Neville House**, make Ballard Estate a uniquely elegant business district.

The General Post Office, combining European and Indian styles

Port Trust Memorial

General Post Office ⑭

Walchand Hirachand Marg.
○ *Mon–Sat.*

Completed in 1911, this fantastic composition of minarets, domes and arches was designed by John Begg and supervised by George Wittet. A prime example of the Indo-Saracenic style, the General Post Office (GPO) building combines elements of Indian architecture, most notably an Islamic dome inspired by the Gol Gumbad in Bijapur *(see p543)*, with classical European traditions. Mumbai's main post office, the GPO has a lofty three-storeyed rotunda inside, which leads to its various departments. Business is transacted from behind delightful old-fashioned wooden counters.

THE DABBAWALLAHS OF MUMBAI

Dabbawallahs delivering home-cooked lunch to office workers

Among Mumbai's most characteristic sights are the *dabbawallahs*, men who pick up freshly cooked lunches from over 100,000 suburban homes and deliver them to offices all over the city. Most office workers spend an average of two hours travelling to work. Hot, home-cooked lunches therefore would normally be an impossible luxury – if it weren't for the *dabbawallas*. They pick up the meals, usually *rotis*, vegetables and *dal*, packed in three or four round stainless steel containers, known as tiffin boxes or *dabbas* (hence the name *dabbawallah*) from each house, colourcode the office addresses onto the lids, thread the *dabbas* onto long poles and cycle off to the nearest station. Here the *dabbas* are handed over to other *dabbawallas*, who deliver them to the right offices. Lunches rarely go astray, and empty *dabbas* are delivered back home by late afternoon. *Dabbawallahs*, traditionally migrants from the neighbouring city of Pune, are organized under the Mumbai Tiffin Box Suppliers Association. They provide one of Mumbai's most efficient services.

Marine Drive, sweeping in an arc along the sea, connecting the northern and southern ends of Mumbai

Marine Drive ⑮

Netaji Subhash Chandra Rd.

Known as the "Queen's Necklace" after the glittering string of streetlights lining the road, Marine Drive (renamed Netaji Subhash Chandra Road) sweeps along a sea-facing promenade which runs from **Nariman Point** to **Malabar Hill**. Built on land reclaimed from the sea in the 1920s, it is also the main arterial link between the suburbs and the city's prime commercial and administrative centres, Nariman Point and the Fort area *(see p453)*. Situated at its eastern periphery is the **Oval Maidan**, nursery of such modern-day Indian cricketing heroes as Sachin Tendulkar (b.1973) and Sunil Gavaskar (b.1949).

The buildings of Marine Drive are characterized by a strong Art Deco flavour, popular in Mumbai during the 1930s and 1940s. With the advent of electric elevators, and with concrete replacing the earlier stone and brick, the apartment blocks on the seafront were built to a uniform height of five floors, making this the most fashionable residential area of the time.

The best way to enjoy Marine Drive during the day is from the upper floor of a red double-decker bus, which provides panoramic views of the sea and the city's skyline. In the evening, it swarms with people taking their daily walks, couples meeting after work and families gathering around the vendors selling coconut water and *bhelpuri* *(see p441)*. **Chowpatty Beach** is the city's most popular promenade and the southernmost of Mumbai's beaches. Earlier cluttered with food stalls and hawkers, the area has now been substantially cleaned up in a drive by the civic authorities. An inexpensive evening destination for the city's residents, it remains lively till late at night. It is also the venue for Mumbai's largest festival, Ganesha Chaturthi *(see p467)*, when huge crowds gather at Chowpatty Beach to immerse images of Ganesha, the elephant-headed god, in the Arabian Sea.

The **National Centre for Performing Arts (NCPA)**, at the southern tip of Marine Drive, is the city's most active venue for music, dance and theatre performances. Its Tata Theatre and Experimental Theatre stage works by international and Indian playwrights with the best of local talent, while India's finest musicians and dancers perform regularly in its other auditoriums *(see pp462–3)*.

Malabar Hill ⑯

Bounded by Napean Sea Rd, Ridge Rd & Walkeshwar Rd.

This leafy residential area, once dotted with bungalows set in large, forested compounds, is today crowded with highrise apartment blocks, home to Mumbai's rich and famous. The Parsi **Towers of Silence** are also located in this area. Parsis *(see p447)*, who believe that the elements of earth, water, air and fire are sacred and should not be defiled, place their dead in these tall, cylindrical stone towers to be picked clean by vultures. This, they believe, is one of the most environmentally friendly ways of disposing of the dead. A fall in Mumbai's vulture population, however, remains a cause of worry. A high wall and a thick belt of trees surround the Towers, which are closed to visitors.

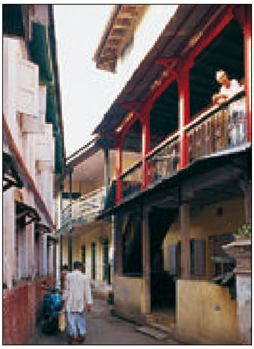
The **Hanging Gardens** provide a pleasant open space in the vicinity, with good views of the city.

The Hanging Gardens, rising in tiers on Malabar Hill

Banganga ⑰

Walkeshwar, Malabar Hill.

Hidden amidst the soaring skyscrapers of Malabar Hill is the small settlement of Banganga, set around a sacred tank. According to legend, Rama, hero of the *Ramayana (see p27)*, pausing here while on his way to rescue his abducted wife Sita, shot an arrow into the ground and a spring gushed forth. This is the origin of the tank, and devotees take regular ritual dips in it. The site has several temples – the **Jabreshwar Mahadeo**, at the tank's corner, is the prettiest, while the **Walkeshwar Temple**, built in the 18th century, has a linga said to have been built by Rama himself. Around the tank and temples are rest houses *(dharamsalas)* for pilgrims.



Khotachiwadi's narrow lanes and balconied houses

Khotachiwadi ⑱

Bounded by Jagannath Shankarshet Rd & Raja Ram Mohan Roy Rd, Girgaum.

In the narrow bylanes of Girgaum in central Mumbai is the old-fashioned neighbourhood of Khotachiwadi (literally, "Headman's Orchard"). Khotachiwadi grew as a suburban settlement, north of the Fort, in the 19th century, and retains the sleepy quality of a coastal village. The low, tile-roofed cottages have timber eaves and open verandahs with cast-iron balconies, the focal point for most daytime activities. The inhabitants were converted to Christianity by Portuguese missionaries and adopted names such as Fernandes, D'Costa and D'Lima. Anant Ashram, a tiny eatery in Khotachiwadi's bylanes, serves excellent prawn curry and rice.

The Mahalaxmi Temple, dedicated to Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth

Mahalaxmi Temple ⑲

Mahalaxmi Temple Lane, off Bhulabhai Desai Rd.

Devotees, both rich and poor, throng this temple dedicated to Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth and Prosperity, who is also known as Laxmi in Maharashtra and in parts of Gujarat *(see p419)*. The approach is lined with stalls selling religious offerings, such as coconuts, flowers and small plastic icons. The temple's history dates to the 18th century, when an embankment being constructed along the bay was repeatedly washed away. The contractor dreamt that if a temple was built to Laxmi, the wall would hold. And this actually happened. Nearby is the **Mahalaxmi Race Course**, next to Mahalaxmi Station, which has horse races every weekend from November to April. In its crowded stands the city's fashionable set rub shoulders with the poor and hopeful.

Haji Ali Mosque ⑳

Off Lala Lajpat Rai Marg.

Approached by a long causeway which gets submerged at high tide, is the *dargah* (tomb) of a rich merchant, Haji Ali Shah Bukhari, who gave up his wealth after a pilgrimage to Mecca. The *dargah* dates to the 15th century, but the dazzling white mosque was built in the 1940s and seems to float on its small island in the Arabian Sea. The causeway, usually lined with beggars, leads to a huge marble courtyard. The tomb lies at its centre and devotees touch their heads to the heavily embroidered *chador* (ceremonial cloth) covering it. Female devotees sit behind a a *jali* (stone screen).

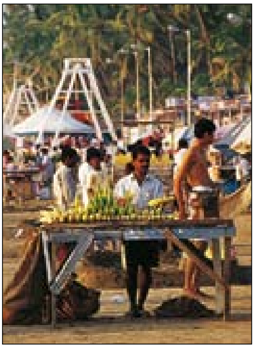
Haji Ali Mosque, built on an island linked to the shore by a causeway

Bandra ㉑

N of Mahim Bay. **Mount St Mary Basilica** Mount Mary Rd. ***Tel*** *(022) 2642 3152.* ○ *daily.*
✺ *Bandra fête (Sep).*

The prosperous suburb of Bandra, in the north of Mumbai, is connected to the city by the Mahim Causeway. Amidst its new apartment blocks, swanky boutiques and restaurants, are vestiges of its past as a small Portuguese enclave. The quiet lanes with tile-roofed bungalows are inhabited by a community of local East Indian Christians, whose ancestors were converted by the Portuguese. A number of Roman Catholic churches, too, were built by the Portuguese, who retained Bandra until the late 18th century. The most important of these is the **Mount St Mary Basilica**, which attracts devotees of all faiths. Outside the church is a bizarre market selling wax models of various body parts. Devotees with ailing limbs buy the appropriate model and solemnly place it on the altar before the Virigin Mary in the belief that she will effect a miraculous cure. A deserted Portuguese fort, **Castella de Aguada**, on a hill, offers spectacular views of the sea and the hinterland.

Bandra's plush **Pali Hill** locality, which has the villas of several Bollywood stars, draws crowds of star-struck Indian tourists. Its other attractions are the seafront promenades at **Bandstand** and **Carter Road**, especially popular with the local youth. Also situated here is a small Koli fishing village.



A green coconut vendor on Mumbai's crowded Juhu Beach

Juhu Beach ㉒

N of Bandra.

The sandy coastline of Juhu Beach lies north of the city centre. This is not a beach for leisurely sunbathing, though, since it is always crowded. On weekends, especially, it is packed with families of picnickers playing cricket on the beach, paddling tentatively in the water and enjoying the sea breeze. Crowds of vendors offering snacks, toys and fairground rides add to the *mela* (fair) atmosphere. Juhu also has several luxury hotels that serve as weekend retreats for Mumbai's tycoons and Bollywood film stars.

The **Prithvi Theatre**, on Juhu Church Road, was founded in 1978 by one of Bollywood's leading families, the Kapoors. It stages plays in Hindi, Gujarati and English, and has a lively café, popular with Mumbai's arty crowd. A theatre festival is held in November *(see p462).*

A film shoot in progress at Film City, Goregaon

Film City ㉓

Goregaon East. i *Contact Film City's Public Relations Office (022) 2840 1533.*

Built in 1978 to meet the needs of Mumbai's booming Hindi film industry, better known as Bollywood *(see pp32–3)*, Film City sprawls over 140 ha (346 acres) in the city's northern outskirts. Bollywood produces some 120 feature films a year, making it the world's largest film industry, rivalled only by South India's Telugu and Tamil film industries. Film City is where many Bollywood block-busters are shot, as are most TV soaps and serials. Song-and-dance routines, scenes of tear-jerking melodrama and action-packed fight sequences take place simultaneously on Film City's dozen shooting stages, against outsize back-drops of medieval forts, dense jungles and opulent card-board palaces. In between takes, mythological heroes rub shoulders with rifle-toting bandits and skimpily clad vamps.

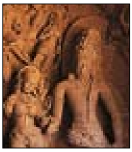
Sanjay Gandhi National Park ㉔

Borivili. i *Conservation Education Centre, near elephant gate Goregaon, (022) 2842 1174.* ○ *Tue–Sun.* ¤
☞ **Kanheri Caves** ○ *Tue–Sun.* ¤

An hour's train ride north of Mumbai, this national park is one of the few in India within the limits of a city. Surrounded by rolling hills, its deciduous forests harbour a wealth of birdlife and fauna, wild boar, cobras, as well as the occasional tiger. Tiger and Lion Safaris are offered in fenced-off sections of the park.

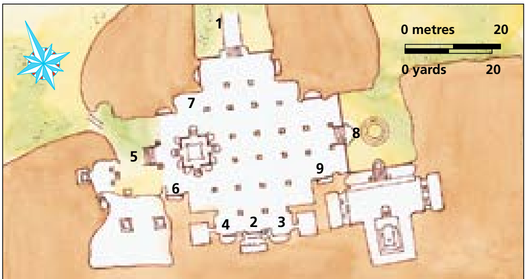
In a picturesque wooded area of the park is an extraordinary complex of 109 Buddhist caves, the **Kanheri Caves**, dating from the 2nd to the 9th centuries AD. The 6th-century **Cave 3** is the most impressive, with its colossal Buddhas, richly carved pillars and brackets and hemispherical stupa. The caves are best approached through the Park's northern entrance.

Elephanta Island ㉕



Shiva and Parvati, carved in stone

Located on an island off Mumbai's eastern shore, the 6th-century AD Elephanta cave temples, chiselled into a rocky cliff and dedicated to Shiva, contain some great masterpieces of Indian sculpture. Originally called Gharapuri or "Fort-City", the island was renamed Elephanta by the Portuguese after a huge stone elephant that once stood here. This is now in the garden of the Bhau Daji Lad Museum in Mumbai's Byculla area. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Elephanta cave temples can be visited on a day trip by boat from Mumbai.



PLAN OF ELEPHANTA CAVES

1 Northern Entrance
2 Mahesamurti
3 Ardhanarishvara
4 Gangadhara
5 Western Entrance
6 Marriage of Shiva-Parvati
7 Shiva spearing Andhaka
8 Eastern Entrance
9 Shiva and Parvati Playing Dice

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

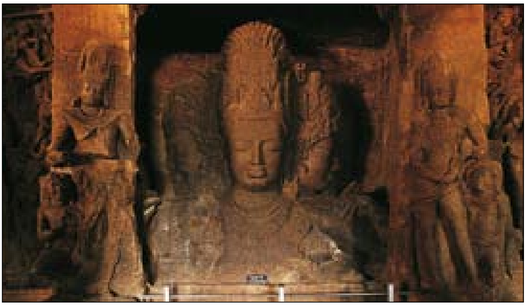
9 km (6 miles) NE of Mumbai. ⛴ *from Gateway of India at 9am.* ℹ *for ferries, (022) 2202 6364.* ○ *Wed–Mon.* *Elephanta Music & Dance Festival (Feb).*

The Elephanta caves, cut into the cliff high above the water

Exploring Elephanta

The origins of the cave temples at Elephanta are lost in obscurity, but in all probability they date to the 6th century AD and represent the period of Brahmanical revival after Buddhism began to decline. From the pier, where visitors disembark from the boats, a long flight of 125 steps leads to the temple's main **Northern Entrance**. This is a huge square hall with sides measuring 40 m (131 ft), supported by two dozen massive pillars. Here, in a deep recess against the rear (south) wall, is the huge triple-headed Shiva statue, the **Mahesamurti**. This is the glory of Elephanta, and few visitors can fail to be moved by this powerful, compelling image, hailed by art historian Percy Brown as "the creation of a genius". The three faces represent Shiva in his different manifestations. The central face with its towering, elaborate crown depicts Shiva the Preserver, sublimely serene and introspective. The one facing west represents Shiva the Creator, gentle, solicitous and graceful. The head facing east, with its cruel mouth, fiercely hooked nose and serpents adorning the hair, shows Shiva as the Destroyer. On either side of the statue are other superb sculptures. The one on the east shows Shiva as **Ardhanarishvara** – the Lord who is Both Male and Female, and thus symbolizes the Divine Unity in which all opposites are resolved. The image on the west is of Shiva as **Gangadhara**, helping the river goddess Ganga descend to earth *(see p163)* while his consort Parvati and other deities look on.

Contrasting images of peace and violence, joy and fury, can be seen in exquisite sculptures throughout the temple. Thus, one sculpture near the **Western Entrance** lyrically depicts the marriage of Shiva and Parvati, while opposite it is a powerful panel showing Shiva brutally impaling the demon Andhaka. The **Eastern Entrance** has Shiva and Parvati contentedly playing dice in their mountain abode, as the demon-king Ravana tries to destroy their home by shaking the mountain.



The 5.5-m (18-ft) high Mahesamurti, dominating the cave temple

Shopping & Entertainment in Mumbai

Mumbai is one of India's best shopping destinations. Large malls, department stores and exclusive boutiques stocking international brand names, coexist with traditional bazaars and pavement stalls selling everything from diamonds to dentures. Mumbai also has a vibrant nightlife, with more discotheques and pubs than any other Indian city. As the home of the Hindi film industry, Bollywood, Mumbai often holds gala premiere nights at its many cinema halls. The city's crowded cultural calendar also includes several concerts, exhibitions, theatre shows and festivals. But perhaps the best entertainment the city offers is the non-stop circus on its bustling streets and sidewalks.

SHOPS AND MARKETS

South Mumbai's main shopping areas include Colaba Causeway, Kemp's Corner, and the shopping arcade in the Oberoi Hotel at Nariman Point. The traditional market for fresh produce is Crawford Market *(see p453)*, while Bhuleshwar and Kalbadevi, north of the Fort area, are popular haunts for textiles and jewellery. Crossroads, a large new shopping mall, has come up in central Mumbai, close to the Haji Ali Mosque.

ANTIQUES AND JEWELLRY

A fascinating place for antiques is Chor Bazaar or "Thieves' Market" near Crawford Market. This warren of shops is crammed with colonial furniture, Victorian bric-a-brac and Chinese porcelain, along with a lot of junk and fakes. Very good bargains can still be found here. **Phillips Antiques**, on Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Chowk, stocks a fine collection of old postcards, prints and Raj-era lithographs. There are strict rules, however, regarding the export of antiques *(see p758)*.

Central Mumbai's Zaveri Bazaar is lined with jewellers' shops, **Tribhovandas Bhimji Zaveri** being the most famous. **Palazzo** at the Crossroads Mall has dozens of jewellery stores under one roof, offering elegant, exclusive designs. The shopping arcades at the **Oberoi** and **Taj Hotels** *(see p707 & p708)* are also good places to shop for jewellery.

TEXTILES AND FASHION

Mumbai is a highly fashion-conscious city and most Indian designers have outlets here. Exclusive boutiques include **Ensemble**, **Melange** and **Abraham & Thakore**, while casual ready-made garments are available at **Cotton World. Fantasia** and **Indian Textiles** specialize in a wide range of traditional Indian textiles and weaves, including silk saris, home furnishings and accessories. For good quality handwoven home furnishings and floor-coverings, the best shop is **Shyam Ahuja**.

HANDICRAFTS AND GIFTS

Handicrafts from all over India are available in Mumbai. The widest range and best quality can be found at the **Cottage Industries Emporium**, **Contemporary Arts and Crafts** and **Bombay Store** in the Fort area. **Chimanlal's** has a good selection of handmade paper, while **Inshallah Maashallah** stocks pure perfume essence *(attar)* in tiny glass bottles capturing the fragrances of rose, vetiver and jasmine.

Mumbai is renowned for its high quality leather goods at reasonable prices. **Rasulbhai Adamji** at Colaba, and many shops in the Oberoi Shopping Centre have a good range of jackets, handbags, wallets and luggage, some of it "inspired" by Gucci, Prada and Louis Vuitton. **Joy Shoes** at the Taj Hotel has high quality shoes and leather accessories. Books, CDs and audio cassettes of both Indian and Western music, are available at various outlets throughout the city, including hotel bookshops. However, one of the best shops for music is **Rhythm House**.

ENTERTAINMENT GUIDES, TICKETS AND VENUES

Daily newspapers list the day's entertainment and events on their engagements page. Another good source of information is the magazine *Discover Mumbai*. A useful website which offers online information on cultural events and entertainment is *www.explocity.com* Tickets for most concerts and plays can be bought at **Rhythm House** or at the venue itself. The major venues for Mumbai's cultural events are the **NCPA** or the National Centre for the Performing Arts *(see p458)*, the **Nehru Centre** auditorium and **Shanmukhananda Hall. Prithvi Theatre** in Juhu *(see p460)* is a lively centre for stage productions. Other active exhibition venues include the **Jehangir Art Gallery**, the **NGMA** (National Gallery of Modern Art) and the Artists' Centre, located at Kala Ghoda *(see pp448-9)*.

PERFORMING ARTS

Mumbai is a great centre of classical Indian music, and many well-known performers can be heard here. This cosmopolitan city also has many enthusiasts of jazz and Western classical music (conductor Zubin Mehta received his early training in Mumbai) and frequent concerts are held by both local and visiting international groups. Classical and folk dance performances from different parts of the country also feature regularly on the cultural calendar. Mumbai has a vibrant theatre tradition, with productions in English as well as Marathi, Gujarati and Hindi. These are often staged in the open at **Horniman Circle Gardens** *(see* *p452)*. The cultural high season is from November to April, though performances take place through the year.

CINEMA

As the capital of the Hindi film industry, Mumbai hosts a number of film-related events. Most of the film studios are located in the suburbs as are the private residences of most screen celebrities. Great fanfare precedes the release of big-budget blockbusters, and glittering premieres are held at popular cinema halls such as **Sterling**, **Regal** and **Metro**. These draw star-struck fans who spend hours standing outside, waiting for a glimpse of their favourite stars. Film festivals, documentary film screenings, lectures, talks and exhibitions are also held throughout the year at various venues, such as the **British Council**.

HERITAGE TOURS

The Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC), offers guided tours of Mumbai on double-decker buses. **Bombay Heritage Walks**, organized by a group of young architects, take visitors through historical districts such as Banganga, Khotachiwadi and the Fort area, on weekends, except during the monsoon (June to September). Prior booking is necessary.

NIGHTCLUBS AND BARS

Mumbai's nightlife is more active than that of any other Indian city. While nightclubs and bars open and close at regular intervals, some have remained consistently popular. One of the liveliest is **Fire & Ice**, ingeniously housed in a mill compound in Parel. In south Mumbai, **Not Just Jazz by the Bay** has live music Wednesday through Saturday. Most hotels have their own bars and nightclubs such as **Insomnia** at the Taj and Opium Den in the Oberoi, both of which attract Bollywood's A-list stars. Another favourite haunt of Mumbai's jetset is **Athena**, one of the city's trendiest new nightspots.

DIRECTORY

ANTIQUES AND JEWELLERY

Palazzo
Crossroads Mall.
Tel *(022) 2351 5890.*

Phillips Antiques
SP Mukherjee Chowk.
Tel *(022) 2202 0564.*

Tribhovandas Bhimji Zaveri
Zaveri Bazaar.
Tel *(022) 2342 5001.*

TEXTILES AND FASHION

Abraham & Thakore
The Courtyard, Colaba.
Tel *(022) 5638 5486.*

Cotton World
Mandlik Rd, Colaba.
Tel *(022) 2283 3294.*

Ensemble
Great Western Bldg, Shahid Bhagat Singh Marg.
Tel *(022) 2287 2883.*

Fantasia
Oberoi Shopping Centre.
Tel *(022) 2284 6369.*

Indian Textiles
Taj Hotel, Apollo Bunder.
Tel *(022) 2202 8783.*

Melange
Altamount Rd.
Tel *(022) 2385 4492.*

Shyam Ahuja
Crossroads Mall.
Tel *(022) 2351 5890.*

HANDICRAFTS AND GIFTS

Bombay Store
Western India House, PM Rd, Fort Area.
Tel *(022) 2288 5048.*

Chimanlal's
Fort Area.
Tel *(022) 2207 7717.*

Cottage Industries Emporium
Chhatrapati Shivaji M Rd.
Tel *(022) 2202 6564.*

Contemporary Arts and Crafts
Napean Sea Rd.
Tel *(022) 2363 1979.*

Inshallah Maashallah
Colaba.
Tel *(022) 2204 9495.*

Joy Shoes
Taj Hotel, Apollo Bunder.
Tel *(022) 5665 3366.*

Rasulbhai Adamji
Colaba.
Tel *(022) 2202 1267.*

Rhythm House
Kala Ghoda.
Tel *(022) 2284 2835.*

ENTERTAINMENT INFORMATION

www.explocity.com

ENTERTAINMENT VENUES

British Council
Nariman Point.
Tel *(022) 2282 3530.*

Jehangir Art Gallery
Fort Area.
Tel *(022) 2284 3989.*

NGMA
Kala Ghoda.
Tel *(022) 2285 2457.*

NCPA
Nariman Point.
Tel *(022) 2283 4500.*

Nehru Centre
Worli.
Tel *(022) 2496 4676.*

Prithvi Theatre
Janaki Kutir,
Juhu.
Tel *(022) 2614 9546.*

Shanmukhananda Hall
King's Circle.
Tel *(022) 2401 5164.*

CINEMA

Metro
MG Rd,
Dhobi Talao.
Tel *(022) 2203 0303.*

Regal
Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Chowk.
Tel *(022) 2202 1017.*

Sterling
Hazarimal Somani Marg.
Tel *(022) 2207 5187.*

HERITAGE TOURS

Bombay Heritage Walks
Tel *(022) 2834 4622.*

NIGHTCLUBS AND BARS

Athena
Minoo Desai Marg,
Colaba.
Tel *(022) 2280 5155.*

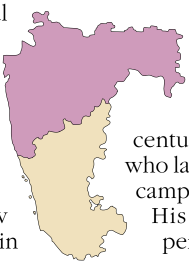
Fire & Ice
Parel.
Tel *(022) 2498 0555.*

Insomnia
Taj Hotel, Apollo Bunder.
Tel *(022) 5665 3366.*

Not Just Jazz by The Bay
Marine Drive.
Tel *(022) 2285 1876.*

MAHARASHTRA

Verdant hills, scenic coastal plains and busy industrial centres make up the varied landscape of Maharashtra, which covers an area of 300,000 sq km (115,831 sq miles). The hills of the Western Ghats, source of many rivers, run parallel to the narrow Konkan Coast, while cradled in the centre is the Deccan Plateau, formed from black volcanic lava 70 million years ago. This area saw a great flowering of art and architecture from the 2nd century BC onwards, and two famous UNESCO World Heritage sites are located here – the Buddhist caves at Ajanta and the rock-cut temples at Ellora. The rocky terrain around Pune is dotted with the massive forts built by the 17th-century Maratha leader, Shivaji, who launched successful guerrilla campaigns against the Mughals. His cult-like status is today perpetuated by the Shiv Sena, a nationalist political party. Modern Maharashtra is a prosperous, highly industrialized region, with a strong agrarian base. Cotton and tobacco are widely cultivated, as are a variety of fruits including oranges, *chikoos* (sapodilla) and mangoes.



SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

Towns & Cities

- Ahmadnagar ❾
- Aurangabad ⓫
- Kolhapur ❹
- Nagpur ⓱
- Pune ❻
- Wardha ⓲

Temple Towns & Holy Places

- Nasik ❿
- Pandharpur ⓳

Historic Sites

- Ajanta ⓮
- Daulatabad ⓬
- Ellora ⓭
- Murud-Janjira ❷

National Parks & Geographical Sites

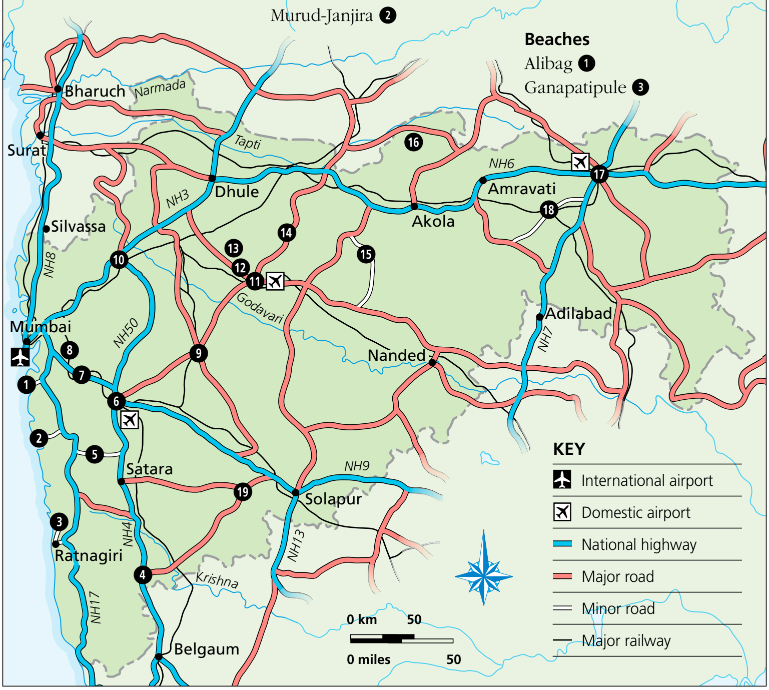
- Lonar ⓯
- Melghat Tiger Reserve ⓰

Hill Stations

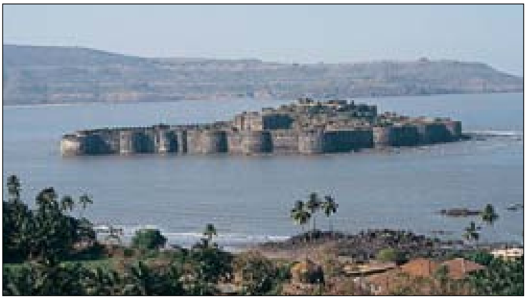
- Lonavla ❼
- Mahabaleshwar ❺
- Matheran ❽

Beaches

- Alibag ❶
- Ganapatipule ❸


Bharuch
Narmada
Surat
Tapti
NH3
Dhule
Silvassa
NH8
NH50
Godavari
Mumbai
Satara
NH4
Ratnagiri
NH17
Krishna
Belgaum
Solapur
NH9
NH13
Nanded
Akola
Amravati
NH6
Adilabad
NH7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19
0 km 50
0 miles 50
KEY
International airport
Domestic airport
National highway
Major road
Minor road
Major railway

◁ **View of the votive stupa in the late 5th-century *chaitya* hall, Cave 19, at Ajanta**



View of the imposing Janjira Fort, built on an island

Alibag ❶

Raigarh district. 108 km (67 miles) S of Mumbai. 🚌 ⛴ *from Gateway of India, Mumbai, to Mandve, 18 km (11 miles) N of Alibag, then bus.*

The port of Alibag was developed by the Marathas in the 17th century to protect their kingdom from the Dutch, Portuguese and the increasingly powerful British. Alibag is today a quiet town, just across the bay from Mumbai. Its most impressive sight is its beach, a 5-km (3-mile) stretch of soft silver sand, lined by a stand of coconut and casuarina trees.

Kolaba Fort, constructedon an island in 1680 by the Maratha ruler Chhatrapati Shivaji *(see p471)*, looms over the skyline. It is a forbidding grey mass of lead, steel and stone, built on a rock jutting from the sea, and can be reached on foot during low tide. Within its high ramparts are enclosed a temple dedicated to Lord Ganesha, and next to it a sweet-water well that must have been useful during sieges. There are two main entrances to the fort, one from the shore and another from the sea. The enormous shore-side doorway is decorated with sculptures of tigers, elephants and peacocks.

Environs

Kihim Beach, 9 km (6 miles) north of Alibag, is a tranquil getaway, with woods brimming with birds and wild flowers. It was the favourite haunt of the famous Indian ornithologist Salim Ali (1896–1987), author of the finest book on Indian birds.

Murud-Janjira ❷

Raigarh district. 185 km (115 miles) S of Mumbai. ⛴ *from Gateway of India, Mumbai to Mandve, 120 km (74 miles) N of Murud, then bus.* 🚌 *from Rajpuri to Janjira Fort.*

A sleepy coastal town with Indo-Gothic houses and meandering pathways, Murud has a picture-perfect beach that promises lazy, sunny afternoons and cool dips in the clean sea. The little village of Rajpuri, 4 km (2.5 miles) south of the main Murud town, is the gateway to the Janjira Fort, the strongest island-fort in the Konkan, still enduring the surge and retreat of the Arabian Sea. Boats are available at Rajpuri to take visitors to the fort.

Also evocatively known as the Jazira-Mehruba or "Moon Fort", it was built in 1511 by the Siddis, who originally arrived in the Deccan from Abyssinia as slave-traders. The fortress, with its high ramparts, 22 bastions and granite walls jointed with lead to withstand the onslaught of the sea, proved invincible against attacks by the Portuguese and British, and even against the great Maratha leader, Shivaji. Steps lead to a sturdy stone gate, where a stone engraving of a lion holding six diminutive elephants in captivity, represents six successive Siddi victories. Rusty cannons point outwards through niches in the ramparts. The palaces, gardens and mosques lie in silent ruin, and luxurious vegetation grows around the palace of the Siddi ruler, Sirul Khan.

Ganapatipule ❸

Ratnagiri district. 365 km (227 miles) S of Mumbai. 🚆 *Ratnagiri, 22 km (14 miles) S of Ganapatipule, then bus.* 🚌 🎉 *Gauri Ganapati (Sep/Oct).*

The small coastal village of Ganapatipule derives its name from the 400-year-old temple of Swayambhu Ganapati, where the naturally occurring idol of Ganapati (the local name of Lord Ganesha), is revered by Hindus as one of the eight sacred sites, or "Ashtha Ganapatis", in India. Despite attracting the usual smattering of holy men and mendicants, its beach has long stretches of pristine white sands and clear waters. Beyond the coast lie groves of fruit trees, including mango, banana, jackfruit, coconut and betel nut.

Alphonso mango

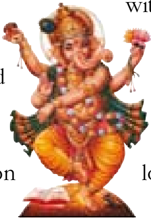
Environs

Ratnagiri, 19 km (12 miles) south of Ganapatipule, is famous for its groves of delicious Alphonso mangoes, locally known as *hapus*. Ratnagiri's fortress, Bala Qila, is situated along the coast, and is intact, with a notable Bhagavati temple within its walls.

The Swayambhu Ganapati Temple, at the base of a hill in Ganapatipule

Ganesha, the Remover of Obstacles

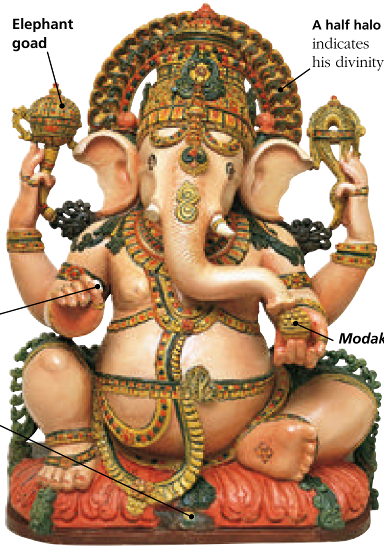
Lord Ganesha, the elephant-headed son of Shiva and Parvati, is the most auspicious and popular deity in India, and especially beloved in Maharashtra. Images of the endearing, potbellied god are found in every household, on temple doorways and shop entrances, on letterheads and wedding invitations. No task or enterprise is ever begun without invoking him, as he is the Lord of New Beginnings. Worshipped in many guises, he is Vighneshvara, the Remover of Obstacles, and Siddhidata, the God of Prosperity and Success. Ganesha is above all a friend, lovable and benign, and his festival, Ganesha Chaturthi, crosses all social boundaries uniting the people of Maharashtra in a frenzied ten-day celebration.



Lord Ganesha imitating the dance of Shiva

LORD GANESHA

Lord Ganesha's four arms hold his various attributes. Two of these, his broken tusk and a round sweetmeat called *modaka*, appear consistently. In the other two hands, he sometimes holds a lotus blossom, an elephant goad, an axe or prayer beads. According to legend, Ganesha gained his elephant head after Shiva, in a state of fury, cut his son's head off and then, in remorse, stuck on the head of a passing elephant.



Elephant goad

A half halo indicates his divinity.

The broken tusk, used as a pen to write the *Mahabharata*, was the result of an encounter with Parasuram *(see p679)*.

Modaka

A rat is the vehicle of Ganesha

Intricate clay images *of Ganesha are made and consecrated on the first day of Ganesha Chaturthi* (see p473). *These are then enshrined in* pandals *or decorated stages, and worshipped continuously for ten days amidst Hindi and Marathi recitations and musical performances.*

Colourful floats, *accompanied by folk dancers, lead the serpentine processions that fill the streets, amidst chants and drumbeats. The processions end at the water's edge, where hundreds of idols are immersed in rivers, lakes or the sea. This final immersion on the tenth day marks the deity's return to his abode.*

See also features on Hindu Mythology *(see pp24–5)*, Shiva *(see p566)* and Vishnu *(see p679)*.

Colourful fishing boats docked off the Malvan coast

Kolhapur ❹

Kolhapur district. 225 km (140 miles) S of Pune. 👥 *485,500.* 🚉 🚌 ℹ *Maharashtra Tourism, (0231) 265 2935.*

Situated on the banks of the Panchganga river, the city of Kolhapur is a thriving commercial centre, noted today for its flourishing dairy industry. It is also one of Maharashtra's most important pilgrimage sites, associated from early times with the worship of Shakti (the Mother Goddess). Ruled by the Hindu Yadava dynasty between the 10th and 13th centuries, it was later occupied by the Mughals. In 1675, Kolhapur was finally seized by the Maratha chief Shivaji *(see p471)*, and was later inherited by his younger son. The state remained with the Bhonsles (one of the four Maratha princely families) until Independence.

Of the numerous temples in Kolhapur, the **Shri Mahalakshmi** or Amba Bai Temple, dedicated to the Mother Goddess, is the most venerated. Built in the 7th century by the Chalukya king Karnadeva, the temple's idol, said to be a *swayambhu*, or naturally occurring monolith, is encrusted with diamonds and other precious stones. The *mandapa* has a finely carved ceiling. Behind the temple are the remains of the **Old Palace** or Rajwada, where members of the former maharaja's family still live.

Its huge entrance hall was once used for large public wedding ceremonies. Situated near the palace gates are the town's wrestling grounds, where young men practise traditional Indian wrestling, known as *kushti*.

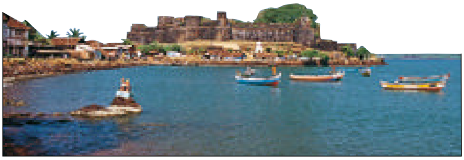
Kolhapuri *chappals*

The **New Palace**, 2 km (1.3 miles) north of the city centre, was completed in 1881 and designed by Major Charles Mant *(see p418)*, who merged European, Jain, Hindu and Islamic elements to create a style which widely became

THE MALVAN COAST

Fishing boat, Malvan coast

The Southern Konkan coastline in the Sindhudurg district, known as the Malvan Coast, is dotted with marine forts and pretty fishing villages which, though off the beaten track, are worth visiting. **Vijaydurg Fort**, 505 km (314 miles) south of Mumbai, stands on the site of an 11th-century fort, rebuilt by the Bijapur sultans *(see pp542–3)* in the 16th century. In 1654, it was further renovated by Shivaji, who added three layers of fortifications, 27 bastions and 300 guns. It became the main naval base for the great Maratha admiral, Kanhoji Angre, who used the fort to plunder European ships in 1698. It fell to the British in 1756; a platform stands within the grounds, where British astronomers set up their telescopes to study a solar eclipse. About 74 km (46 miles) south of Vijaydurg, **Sindhudurg Fort**, built by Shivaji in 1664, lies deserted on an island known as Kurte. With its 10-m (33-ft) high ramparts, it was a Maratha stronghold until power shifted to Vijaydurg. It is the only place in Maharashtra where a statue of Shivaji depicts him without a beard. His palm and feet impressions are preserved in mortar near the entrance. The small port of **Malvan**, 4 km (2.5 miles) north of Sindhudurg, lends its name to this stretch of coast. It is being developed into a beach resort, as is **Vengurla**, 52 km (32 miles) south of Malvan. **Savantwadi**, 23 km (14 miles) east of Vengurla, was the capital of the Bhonsle kings. The art of making *ganjifa* cards (painted, circular playing cards) was developed here. The town is also known for its wooden toys and lacquer work. **Amboli**, 25 km (16 miles) northeast of Savantwadi, is a pretty hill station.



A view of Vijaydurg Fort, overlooking fishing boats in the bay

known as the Indo-Saracenic style of architecture. The palace is today the Shahji Chhatrapati Museum and displays a collection of royal memorabilia, including garments, hunting photographs and one of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb's swords.

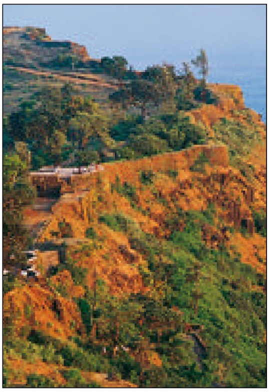
The **Town Hall**, another structure designed by Mant, has a small museum with a number of artifacts from nearby excavation sites. Kolhapur is also famous for its handcrafted leather slippers, known as Kolhapuri *chappals*.

Old Palace
○ *daily.*

New Palace
○ *daily.*

Environs

One of the most important forts in the Deccan is at **Panhala**, a hill station 19 km (12 miles) northwest of Kolhapur. Situated on a steep hillside, the fortress is well protected by three impressive double walled gates, and 7-km (4-mile) long ramparts. Within its walls stand two temples, one dedicated to Amba Bai and the other to Maruti, the Wind God. The most interesting monuments are the huge stone granaries, the largest of which, Ganga Kothi, covers 948 sq m (10,204 sq ft). Established in the 12th century by Raja Bhoja II, the fortress fell successively to the Yadavas, the Adil Shahis of Bijapur, Shivaji, Emperor Aurangzeb and the British. There are many private homes in Panhala as well, including that of the famous Indian singer Lata Mangeshkar *(see p503)*.



Panhala Fort in the picturesque Sahyadri Hills, after the monsoon

Panchgani, with spectacular views of the Krishna river

Mahabaleshwar ❺

Satara district. 115 km (72 miles) SW of Pune. *12,800.* *Cycles available.*

The largest hill station in Maharashtra, Mahabalesh-war is situated 1,372 m (4,501 ft) above sea level. In 1828, Sir John Malcolm, Governor of Bombay, chose this beautiful spot as the site for the official sanatorium. Soon after, the wooded slopes were covered with typical colonial structures, among them **Christ Church**, **Frere Hall**, **Government House** (which was the grand residence of the governor), the **Mahabaleshwar Club**, and the ever-popular polo grounds and race course.

Due to its high altitude, the town has a cool climate and offers many pleasant walks. There are also several lookout points such as **Bombay Point**, from where the sea can be seen on a clear day, and **Arthur's Seat**, which affords panoramic views of the Konkan Coast. **Venna Lake** has facilities for boating.

In the old town is the sacred **Krishna Temple**, supposedly built on the legendary site of the Panchganga, or source of five rivers – the Koyna, Savitri, Venna, Gayatri and the mighty Krishna. The latter covers 1,400 km (870 miles), stretching from this spot to the Bay of Bengal on the east coast. The temple has a much venerated, naturally occurring Shivalinga, and a small tank. There are two other temples here, dedicated to Hanuman and Rama. There are also several berry farms close by, where visitors can help to pick strawberries, raspberries and mulberries.

Environs

The hill station of **Panchgani**, 18 km (11 miles) east of Mahabaleshwar, is surrounded by five hills. The town is the starting point for many scenic trekking trails *(see p473)*. It is also dotted with some charming old British and Parsi bungalows, some of which can be visited. The majestic hilltop forts of **Pratapgarh** and **Raigad**, 18 km (11 miles) west and 70 km (44 miles) northwestof Mahabaleshwar respectively, were both Maratha strongholds. They offer commanding views of the surrounding countryside.

Water spout, Krishna Temple

About 111 km (69 miles) south of Mahabaleshwar is **Chiplun**, lying on the banks of the Vashishti river, whose waters supply Koyna Lake, a large man-made reservoir. The town is well-known for its irrigation scheme, developed in the 1980s, that provides water to the coastal fringe between the Sahyadri Hills and the sea. This quiet place offers splendid views of the Vashishti river as it winds through the hills.

The sprawling campus of Pune University

Pune ❻

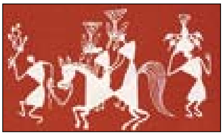
Pune district. 170 km (106 miles) SE of Mumbai. 👥 *2,540,500.* ✈ *12 km (7 miles) NE of city centre, then taxi or auto.* 🚉 🚌 ℹ *Maharashtra Tourism, I Block, Central Bldg, (020) 2612 6867.* 🎉 *Ganesha Chaturthi (Aug/Sep).*

The fast-growing, industrial city of Pune is situated on the Deccan Plateau, at the confluence of the Mutha and Mula rivers, and is bounded by the Sahyadris in the west. Its pleasant climate and proximity to Mumbai made it the perfect monsoon capital for the British in the 19th century. Then called Poona, it became an important administrative centre and military cantonment. Even today, the Indian army's Southern Command is based here.

Pune was also the childhood home of the Maratha leader, Shivaji. From 1750 until 1817, it was the capital of the Maratha Confederacy and was ruled by the Peshwas. The remains of their **Shaniwar Wada Palace** is in the old city. Built in 1736, the palace was razed in a fire in 1828. Only its outer walls and the main entrance with large spikes, designed to deter the enemy's elephants, survive. Further south is **Vishram Bagh Wada**, a beautiful Peshwa palace with an elaborate wooden façade.

For many visitors, Pune is synonymous with the famous **Osho International Commune** founded by Bhagwan Rajneesh or Osho, and situated at Koregaon Park in the north of the city. The flamboyant pop mystic, or "sex guru" as he was called, had a meteoric rise in the West. Even after his demise in 1990, his well-appointed ashram continues to attract devotees from Europe and America. Housed in a traditional Maratha house or *wada*, is the charming privately-owned **Raja Kelkar Museum**. On display are a collection of beautiful everyday objects such as pots, lamps, pens, ink stands, collection of nutcrackers, and other utilitarian items. An interesting piece is a Maharashtrian Chitrakathi scroll painting, used in folk theatre performances.

The **Tribal Museum**, east of the railway station, showcases the state's tribal cultures, especially from the Sahyadri and Gondwana regions.



A Warli painting from Raja Kelkar Museum

The **Aga Khan Palace**, across the Mula river to the north of the city, was where Mahatma Gandhi was imprisoned by the British for two years; today, it is the Gandhi National Memorial. Gandhi's wife, Kasturba, died here and her ashes have been interred in a memorial in the gardens.

Other places of interest in the city include St Mary's Church, a fine garrison structure consecrated in 1825; the rock-cut Pataleshwar Temple, dating from the 8th century; the Parvati Temple perched on a hilltop; and fine gardens, such as Empress Botanical Gardens and Bund Gardens.

Pune is the centre of Maratha culture, with a lively tradition of theatre, classical music and dance. It is also an important university town and is home to the prestigious government-run Film and Television Institute and the National Film Archives.

Environs

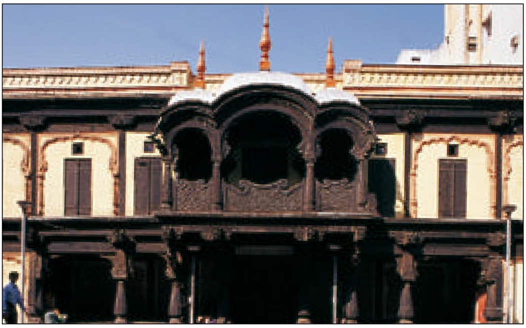
About 6 km (4 miles) southwest is the **National Defence Academy**, the training school for army, navy and air force cadets, at Khadakvasla. Further southwest are the forts of **Rajgad** and **Sinhgad** (the "Lion Fort"). The latter is associated with Shivaji's general, Tanaji Malasure. According to legend, he tied strong ropes to monitor lizards, made the creatures stick to the fort walls with their adhesive foot pads, and thus scaled the walls and captured the fort.

🏛 Osho International Commune
Tel *(020) 401 9999.* ○ *daily.* 💰 👉

🏛 Raja Kelkar Museum
1378, Shukrawar Peth. ○ *daily.*
● *public hols.* 💰

🏛 Tribal Museum
Off Koregaon Rd. ○ *daily.*

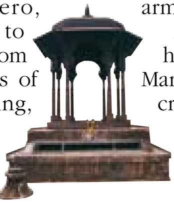
🏛 Aga Khan Palace
Ahmadnagar Rd. ○ *Mon–Sat.*
● *2nd & 4th Sat, public hols.* 💰



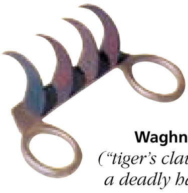
Vishram Bagh Wada, a Peshwa palace in the heart of the old city

Shivaji and the Marathas

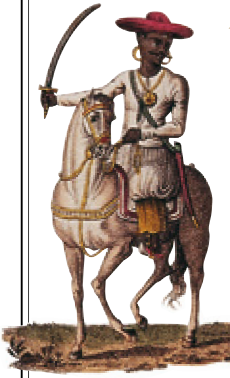
Maharashtra's greatest hero, Shivaji, was born in 1627 to Shahji Bhonsle, a chieftain from Pune who served the sultans of Bijapur *(see pp542–5)*. Daring, ambitious and restless since his boyhood, by the age of 19 he had become the head of a band of intrepid fighters. Soon, Shivaji's brilliant guerrilla tactics against Emperor Aurangzeb and the powerful Mughal army, and his swift conquests of mountain and sea forts, enabled him to establish a separate Maratha kingdom. In 1674, he was crowned Chhatrapati, the traditional title of a Hindu monarch, at his capital, Raigad. When he died in 1680, at the age of 53, he left behind a powerful Maratha state, which continued to play an important role in Indian history for the next 100 years.



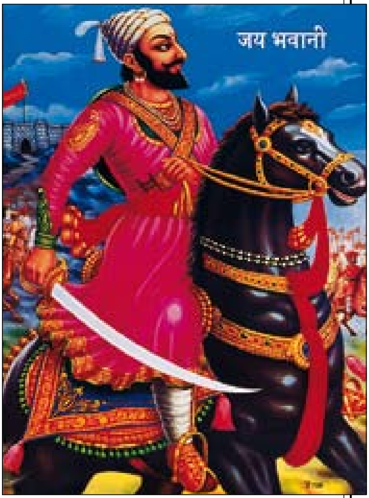
Coronation Canopy at Raigad



Waghnakh *("tiger's claw"), a deadly hand weapon, was used by Shivaji to overcome and kill Afzal Khan, the Bijapur general, in a "friendly" meeting at Pratapgad.*



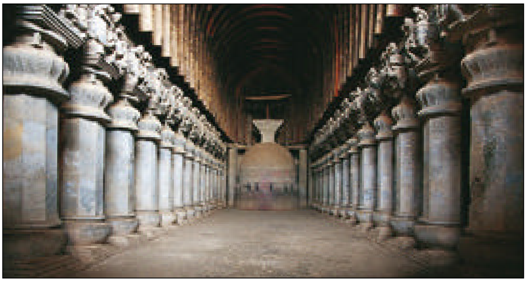
Maratha horsemen *were feared for their lightning raids which wrought havoc on enemy territory. The Deccan Plateau's hilly terrain aided their guerrilla tactics against the Mughals.*



Shivaji *is revered all over Maharashtra as a god-like hero. A fearless soldier and charismatic leader, he united the Marathas into a formidable force that defied the mighty Mughals. Today, he has become a symbol for the Hindu revivalist movement.*

Fortresses, *such as Rajgad and Raigad* (see p469) *and the sea forts* (see p468) *along the west coast, were the key to Maratha strategy and success. Shivaji's conquest of the crucial Purandhar Fort in 1649 compelled the sultan of Bijapur to condemn him as a rebel.*

Shaniwar Wada *was the former residence of the Peshwas, who came to power after Shivaji's grandson's death. The other main clans of the Maratha Confederacy – which was a significant power in the 18th century – were Holkars* (see p246), *Scindias* (see pp228–9), *Gaekwads* (see p419) *and Bhonsles* (see p468).



The Buddhist *chaitya griha* at Karla Cave, near Lonavla

Lonavla ⑦

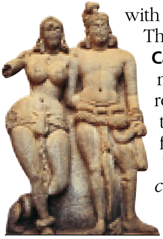
Pune district. 62 km (39 miles) NW of Pune. 👥 *55,700.* 🚆 🚌 **Karla Cave** ℹ *Maharashtra Tourism, Karla, (02114) 282 230.* ○ *daily.* 🎫 **Bhaja Caves** 🎫

Situated on the main train line from Mumbai to Pune, Lonavla was once a sleepy hill station famous for its *chikki*, a type of caramelized sweet. It has now become an extremely popular weekend getaway for city-dwellers from nearby Mumbai. Spread around the bustling main street, lined with souvenir shops, the town offers pleasant walks and is a convenient base for exploring the surrounding hills.

Environs

About 8 km (5 miles) northwest of Lonavla is **Khandala**, another pretty town with panoramic views of the scenic Western Ghats. The famous Buddhist rock-cut **Karla Cave**, 11 km (7 miles) east of Lonavla, dates from the 2nd to 1st centuries BC. The splendid *chaitya griha (see p20)*, the largest and best preserved of the early Buddhist caves in the Deccan, is the most significant sight here. It has a magnificently sculpted courtyard, a towering 14-m (46-ft) high façade with a horseshoe shaped window, and a large pillared hall with a monolithic stupa.

The 20-odd **Bhaja Caves**, located 3 km (2 miles) off the Karla road, are the oldest in the region, dating from the 2nd century BC. Cave 12, a *chaitya griha*, still contains the remains of wooden beams on its ceiling. On either side of the façade are carvings of multistoreyed structures with windows and balconies. The **Bedsa Caves**, situated 9 km (6 miles) southeast of Bhaja, date to the 1st century AD. The roof of the main cave bears faint traces of paintings.



Statue of a divine couple, Karla Cave

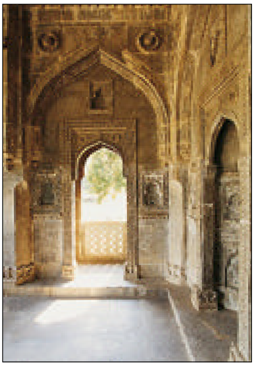
Matheran ⑧

Raigarh district. 118 km (73 miles) NW of Pune. 👥 *5,200.* 🚆 *From Neral Junction, take the toy train to Matheran (2 hrs).* 🚌 ℹ *Opp railway station.*

The closest hill station to Mumbai, Matheran (which means "Mother Forest") lies at a height of 803 m (2,635 ft) above sea level. This picturesque town is situated in the forested Sahyadri Hills. In 1855, Lord Elphinstone, the governor of Bombay, visited Matheran, and the town soon became fashionable. The stately **Elphinstone Lodge** that he built became his weekend retreat. A railway line was laid in 1907, and a quaint toy train *(see p777)* still winds its way slowly through hills and forests from the junction at Neral. All motor vehicles are completely banned within the limits of the town, making it uniquely peaceful, despite the burgeoning crowds of visitors, particularly on weekends.

Matheran has as many as 33 lookout points. **Porcupine Point** or Sunset Point, a favourite with sightseers, is known for its spectacular sunsets. **Louisa Point** has views of the ruined Prabal Fort and a mountain trail called Shivaji's Ladder. By far the most impressive viewpoint is **Hart Point**, from where it is possible, on a clear day, to see Mumbai in the distance. St Paul's Anglican Church, the pretty Lord's Hotel and the Roman Catholic Church are among the many Raj-era buildings in Matheran.

Splendid views at Porcupine Point, also known as Sunset Point, Matheran



Carved stonework, Damri Mosque

Ahmadnagar ❾

Ahmadnagar district. 140 km (87 miles) NE of Pune. 👥 *307,500.* 🚉 🚌

The seat of a powerful Muslim kingdom in the 16th century, Ahmadnagar was founded in 1490 by Ahmad Nizam Shah Bahri, the son of a Hindu convert. In 1599, the Mughals, led by Akbar, invaded the city after his favourite commander Abu'l Fazl murdered the ruling sultan. However, the sultan's sister, Chand Bibi, ably defended the kingdom. The succeeding years saw the rise of Malik Ambar, a former African slave who fought successful battles against neighbouring Bidar *(see p545)* and Golconda *(see pp666–7)*. In 1636, the kingdom finally submitted to Mughal rule.

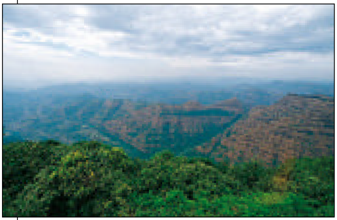
The rulers of the Nizam Shahi dynasty were great builders, and their style of architecture shows an unmistakeable Persian influence. The **Ahmadnagar Fort**, 4 km (2.5 miles) northeast of the station, was built in 1490, though the impressive stone walls were added in 1563. Its palace, the only surviving structure, consists of a large hall with a series of domes. In 1942 it housed an important political prisoner, Jawaharlal Nehru, who wrote his famous book, *The Discovery of India*, here. The **Jami Masjid** dates to the same period. Nearby is the ornate **Damri Mosque**. Built in 1568, it has a cut-out trefoil parapet and finials topped by miniature pavilions.

Emperor Aurangzeb died in Ahmadnagar in 1707, and his body rested briefly at the small **Alamgir Dargah**, near the cantonment, before being interred at Khuldabad *(see 475)*.

To the west of the town lies **Bagh Rauza**, a walled garden complex. It contains the mausoleum of Ahmad Nizam Shah Bahri, which has a lavishly decorated interior.

HIKING IN THE SAHYADRIS

The Western Ghats, also known in Maharashtra as the Sahyadris, run parallel to India's west coast and stretch across the states of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Formed from volcanic rock, the hills are a maze of ridges and valleys. In Maharashtra, the many popular hill stations serve as excellent starting points for a number of scenic walking trails. **Mahabaleshwar** and **Panchgani** are particularly well-marked with hiking routes that lead through lush forests and valleys. These hills also have a wealth of craggy rock-faces perfect for climbing and **Lonavla** is a favourite base for rock climbing enthusiasts. **Matheran** has a much-trodden path known as Shivaji's Ladder, which leads from One Tree Hill down to the valley below. The Sahyadri Hills are particularly beautiful in September after the rains, when the hills are carpeted with wild flowers and cascading waterfalls seem to appear at every turn.



The rugged ranges of the Sahyadri Hills

FESTIVALS OF MAHARASHTRA

Janmashtami *(Jul/Aug)*. The birth of Lord Krishna is celebrated enthusiastically all over the state. Pots of butter are strung high in the streets and human pyramids attempt to reach them, imitating the god's childhood pranks.

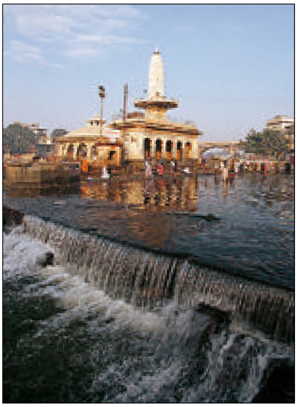
Janmashtami in Mumbai

Naga Panchami *(Aug/Sep)*. Snakes, considered powerful creatures and revered across India, are worshipped during this festival. After being fed cupfuls of milk, they are taken out in colourful processions and later released into the fields.

Ganesha Chaturthi *(Aug/Sep)*. This is the most significant festival in Maharashtra, celebrated with particular fervour in Pune and Mumbai. Clay idols of Lord Ganesha *(see p467)* are made and then worshipped over 10 days, amidst lively festivities. After this they are led in colourful processions to the closest water body and immersed.

Kalidasa Festival *(Nov)*, Nagpur. Some of the most renowned exponents of classical music and dance gather at this festival, organized to honour the 4th-century Sanskrit dramatist and poet, Kalidasa.

Ellora Festival *(Dec)*, Ellora. This festival presents a variety of classical performing arts against the evocative setting of the Kailasanatha Temple.



The holy tank of Ramkund, Nasik

Nasik ⑩

Nasik district. 187 km (116 miles) NE of Mumbai. 👥 *1,077,000.* 🚉 🚌 ℹ *Maharashtra Tourism, (0253) 257 0059.* 🎪 *Kumbh Mela (every 12 years).*

The town of Nasik is one of India's most holy sites. A bustling temple town, built on both banks of the Godavari river, it has almost 200 shrines. The ghats that line the river front are the venue for the spectacular Kumbh Mela *(see p211)*. Legend says that Rama, hero of the *Ramayana (see p27)*, lived here during his 14-year exile. **Ramkund**, the centrally located tank and the town's focal point, is believed to mark the spot where Rama and his wife Sita bathed. The ashes of the dead are also immersed here.

Most of Nasik's temples date to the 18th century. The **Kala Rama Temple**, east of Ramkund, is built in black stone with a 25-m (82-ft) high *shikhara*. It supposedly marks the spot where Sita was abducted by Ravana. The **Rameshwar Temple** has carvings on the roof of its hall, while the **Muktidham Temple**, close to the station, carries inscriptions from the *Bhagavad Gita* on its walls.

Environs

Pandu Lena, 8 km (5 miles) south of Nasik, has 24 Buddhist caves dating to the 1st and 2nd centuries BC. The oldest is Cave 10, a *vihara* (monastery) which has splendid sculptures and inscriptions above its entrance. Cave 18, an early *chaitya griha*, has a beautifully carved exterior. Other fine caves include Caves 3 and 20. The sacred **Trimbakeshwar Temple**, 33 km (21 miles) west of Nasik, is built on the site of one of Shiva's 12 naturally-occurring *jyotirlingas* (lingas of light). It is surrounded by a large paved platform and has a carved *shikhara*. Though closed to non-Hindus, visitors can still get a good view of the courtyard and the shrine leading off it.

About 65 km (40 miles) south of Nasik is **Shirdi**, the temple complex of the first Sai Baba, Maharashtra's most popular saint, who died in 1918.

Aurangabad ⑪

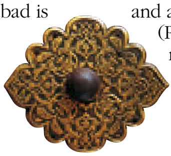
Aurangabad district. 404 km (251 miles) NE of Mumbai. 👥 *873,000.* ✈ *10 km (6 miles) E of town centre, then taxi.* 🚉 🚌 ℹ *Maharashtra Tourism, Station Rd East, (0240) 233 1513.*

The largest city in northern Maharashtra, Aurangabad is the nearest air-link to the splendid caves at Ellora and Ajanta *(see pp476–81)*. It was founded in 1610 by Malik Ambar, prime minister of the Nizam Shahi rulers of Ahmadnagar *(see p473)*. In 1653 it became the headquarters of Aurangzeb, the last great Mughal emperor. It was from this city – which he renamed after himself – that he conquered the Deccan states.

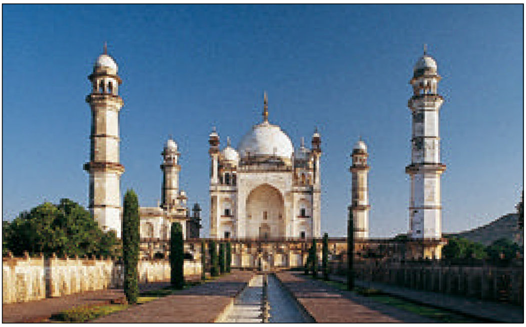
The city's most famous monument is the **Bibi ka Maqbara**. Located outside the walled city, this imitation of the Taj was built in 1678 by Aurangzeb's son, Azam Shah, in memory of his mother Rabia Durrani. Standing in the middle of a large Mughal garden, it has four disproportionately large minarets at the ends of its raised platform. Like the Taj, it uses white marble and stucco, but there is none of the fine *pietra dura* work that distinguishes Shah Jahan's creation *(see pp172–3)*.

Aurangzeb's walled city makes up the central part of the town, although a few structures from Malik Ambar's older city remain, including the **Naukonda Palace** (largely in ruins) and the **Jami Masjid**. On the left bank of the Khan river is the **Dargah of Baba Shah Musafir**, a Sufi saint who was Aurangzeb's spiritual guide. The complex contains a small mosque, a *madrasa* (theological college), a law court, the zenana (women's quarters) and a water mill (Panchakki), fed by a rectangular tank.

Also within the old city, close to Zafar Gate, is the **Himroo Factory**. Aurangabad is famed for its ancient art of weaving brocade, using silk and gold threads, known as *kamkhab*. When the city's prosperity declined, the weavers began



Detail of the entrance door, Bibi ka Maqbara



Bibi ka Maqbara in Aurangabad, an imitation of Agra's Taj Mahal

An ornately carved pillared hall in Cave 3, Aurangabad Caves

using less expensive cotton and silver threads, producing *himroo,* which literally means similar. A variety of such shawls and saris are available in showrooms across town. The factory also produces rich Paithani saris, intricately woven with gold thread.

***Himroo* fabric, Aurangabad**

Environs

About 3 km (2 miles) north are the **Aurangabad Caves**. Mainly excavated during the Vakataka and Kalachuri periods (6th and 7th centuries), these caves can be divided into two groups. Of the five caves in the western group, the oldest is Cave 4, dating to the 1st century AD. It is a fine *chaitya griha* with a monolithic stupa. Carved on the rock face outside is a superb image of the Buddha, seated on a lion throne. Cave 3 (5th century) has an ingeniously designed pillared hall that is acoustically sensitive and amplifies sound. Inside the inner sanctum, a Seated Buddha is flanked by devotees with floral offerings.

The eastern group, nearby, comprises four caves. Cave 6 has delicately sculpted Bodhisattvas, surrounded by flying figures. The most splendid of the caves is Cave 7, a sumptuous shrine with large sculptures of Tara and Avalokitesvara *(see p141)*. Its inner sanctum has a superb frieze of a female dancer accompanied by seven musicians.

Daulatabad ⑫

Aurangabad district. 13 km (8 miles) E of Aurangabad. 🚌 *Bus tours are offered by Maharashtra Tourism, Aurangabad, (0240) 233 1513. Taxis & jeeps also available from Aurangabad.* ○ *daily.* 🎟

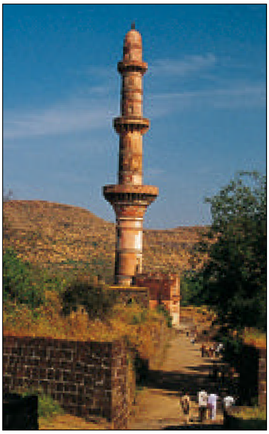
Perched on a granite outcrop of the Deccan Plateau, this formidable fort has witnessed some of the greatest carnage in the region. Originally known as Deogiri, it was captured in 1296 by Alauddin Khilji, the Deccan's first Muslim invader from Delhi. He was followed by Muhammad bin Tughluq, who annexed the fort in 1328 and renamed the town Daulatabad ("City of Fortune"). In a fit of misguided reasoning, he decided to shift his capital here, and compelled Delhi's entire population to march across 1,127 km (700 miles). Thousands died of starvation or disease along the way, and when the move failed, the sultan and his court marched back to Delhi. Daulatabad was successively conquered by the Deccani Bahmani sultans, the Nizam Shahis, the Mughals, the Marathas and finally the Nizam of Hyderabad – each conquest proving more bloody and savage than the last.

The pyramid-shaped hill, on which the imposing fort is built, stands apart from the surrounding ranges, and towers to a height of 183 m (600 ft). This made Mughal emperor Shah Jahan's chronicler note that "neither ant nor snake could scale it". Four solid concentric walls protect the fort. The first of its three zones is **Ambarkot**, the outer fort. Within, stands the 60-m (197-ft) high victory tower, **Chand Minar**, built in 1435 by Alauddin Bahmani to celebrate his conquest of the fort. In the nearby **Jami Masjid**, 106 pillars from Jain and Hindu temples separate the main hall into 25 aisles. A triple gateway studded with iron spikes provides access into **Kataka**, the inner fort. Gateways lead through fortified walls into the base of the citadel, known as **Balakot**, separated by a moat once infested by crocodiles.

Near the innermost gate lies the blue and white tiled **Chini Mahal**, where the last sultan of Golconda was imprisoned by Aurangzeb in 1687. On a nearby bastion is the enormous bronze cannon, the **Qila Shikhan** or "Fort Breaker". This 6-m (20-ft) long cannon has a splendid ram's head, and Persian inscriptions along its length refer to it as the "Creator of Storms". A series of dark tunnels lead to the heart of the citadel and end near a pillared pavilion, **Baradari**, a late Mughal building. The fort's ramparts offer sweeping views.

Environs

The walled village of **Khuldabad** ("Heavenly Abode") is 10 km (6 miles) north of Daulatabad. The Alamgir Dargah, dedicated to the Muslim saint, Sayeed Zain-ud-din, (d.1370), is its most famous monument. Also known as Rauza, this religious complex, established by Sufi saints in the 14th century, was considered so sacred that several Deccani sultans chose to be buried here. Emperor Aurangzeb, who died in the Deccan in 1707, is buried in a simple tomb in the courtyard. The beautiful tomb of Malik Ambar *(see p473)*, is a short distance to the north.



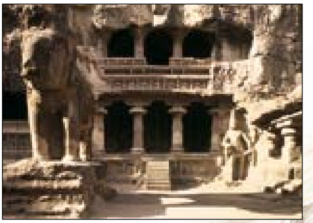
The Chand Minar, once covered in glazed Persian tiles, Daulatabad

Ellora: Kailasanatha Temple ⓭

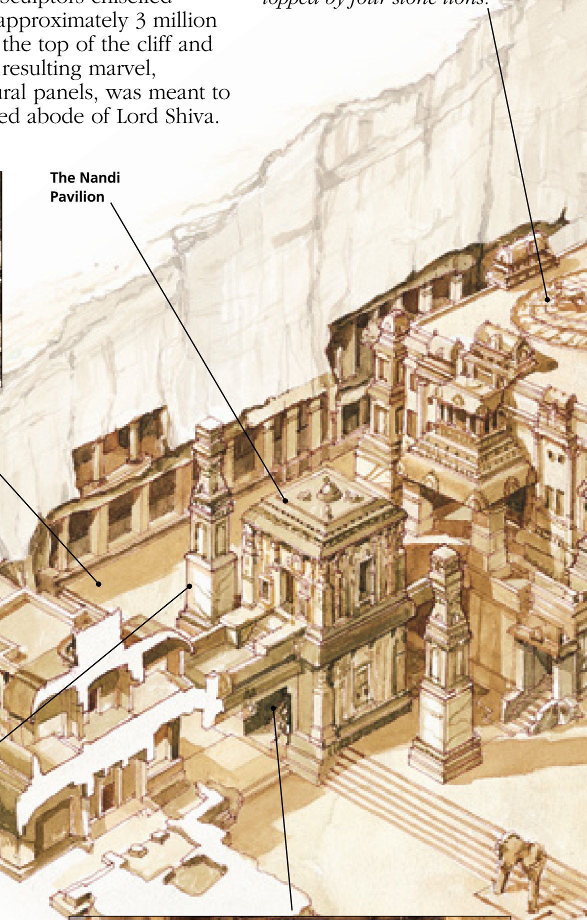
Detail, roof of the entrance gateway

The finest of the Ellora group of rock-cut caves is the magnificent Kailasanatha Temple (Cave 16), a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Commissioned by the Rashtrakuta king Krishna I in the 8th century, this mammoth complex, spanning 81 m (266 ft) by 47 m (154 ft), was carved out of a huge rocky cliff face. Sculptors chiselled through 85,000 cubic metres (approximately 3 million cubic ft) of rock, beginning at the top of the cliff and working their way down. The resulting marvel, embellished with huge sculptural panels, was meant to depict Mount Kailasa, the sacred abode of Lord Shiva.

★ The Roof
The mandapa *(assembly hall) roof is embellished by a lotus carved in concentric rings, topped by four stone lions.*



Courtyard
On either side of the courtyard are two life-size elephants.

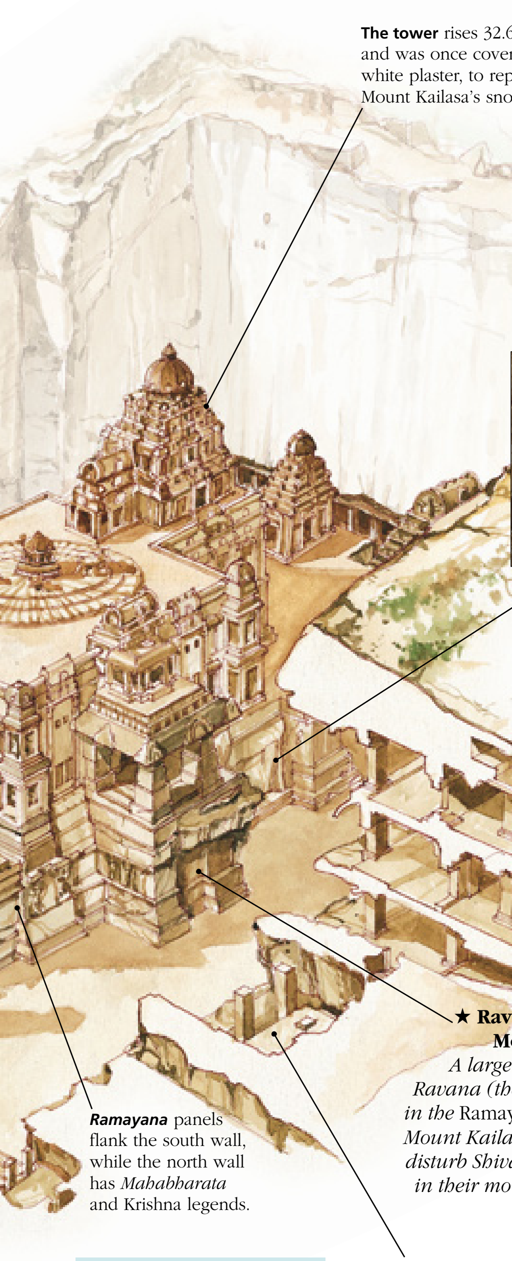


Obelisks
Flanking the Nandi Pavilion are two monolithic pillars, 17 m (56 ft) high, with carvings of lotus friezes and garlands.

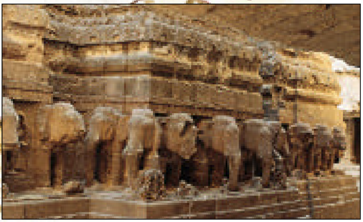
★ Lakshmi with Elephants
Facing the entrance, the ornate Gajalakshmi panel in the Nandi Pavilion depicts Lakshmi seated in a lotus pond and being bathed by elephants bearing upturned pots in their trunks.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Aurangabad district. 30 km (19) miles) NW of Aurangabad. 🚌 *Jeeps are also available at Aurangabad & tour operators also organize trips.* ○ *Tue–Sun, (all caves).* ✋ 📷 *Flash photography is prohibited. Light is best in the afternoon.* ✋ *Take packed lunch, a torch, wear comfortable shoes and a sun hat.* 🎉 *Ellora Festival (Dec).*

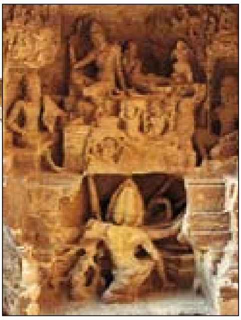


The tower rises 32.6 m (107 ft), and was once covered in white plaster, to replicate Mount Kailasa's snowy peaks.



Supporting Elephants
Elephants with lotuses in their trunks are carved all along the lower storey, and appear to support the structure.

Rock-cut monasteries



★ Ravana Shaking Mount Kailasa
A large panel depicts Ravana (the demon king in the Ramayana*) shaking Mount Kailasa in order to disturb Shiva and Parvati in their mountain home.*

Ramayana panels flank the south wall, while the north wall has *Mahabharata* and Krishna legends.

STAR FEATURES

- ★ The Roof
- ★ Lakshmi with Elephants
- ★ Ravana Shaking Mount Kailasa

Three Goddesses
The Hall of Sacrifice contains life-size images of Durga, Chamunda and Kali, as well as of Ganesha, Parvati and the seven mother goddesses.

Exploring Ellora

View of the dramatic Ellora escarpment with its seasonal waterfall

The 34 caves at Ellora, hewn from a 2-km (1.3-mile) long escarpment, are among the most splendid examples of rock-cut architecture in India.

The emergence and growing importance of Ellora coincided with the decline of Buddhism, and a Hindu renaissance under the Chalukya and Rashtrakuta dynasties (7th–9th centuries AD). Ellora was situated on an important trade route that ran between Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh and the west coast. It was the revenue from this very lucrative trade that sustained 500 years of excavation at Ellora, as the older Ajanta caves began to be abandoned.

The caves at Ellora fall into three distinct groups – Buddhist, Hindu and Jain – and they are numbered from the southern end. The **Buddhist Caves** (1 to 12) date from the Chalukya period, between the 7th and 8th centuries. The first nine are variations of *viharas* or monasteries, and are filled with fine Buddha figures, Bodhisattvas and scenes from Buddhist mythology. The most splendid is **Cave 10**, or Vishwakarma, named after the celestial carpenter. A striking *chaitya griha (see p20)*, it is dominated by a figure of the Teaching Buddha carved in front of a votive stupa, placed under a vaulted roof. It is so intricately carved that it seems to be made of wood. Other important caves are **Cave 11**, or Do Thal (two-storeyed), and **Cave 12**, or Tin Thal (three-storeyed). The upper hall of Cave 12 has large Bodhisattvas carved on its walls, while rows of seven Buddha figures flank the entrance to the antechamber.

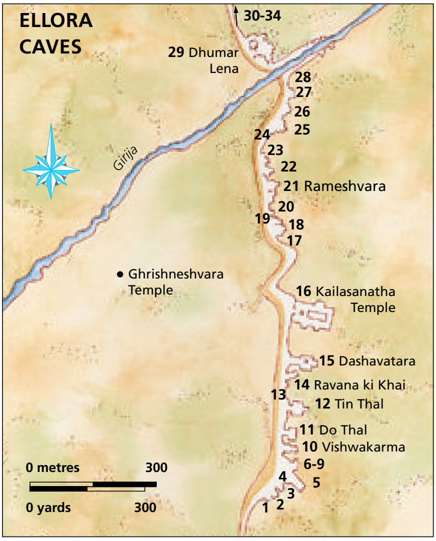
The **Hindu Caves** (13 to 29), were carved out between the 7th and 9th centuries, and represent the peak of Ellora's development. **Cave 14**, or Ravana ki Khai, contains impressive sculptures of deities from the Hindu pantheon, such as Durga slaying the buffalo demon, and Vishnu as the boar-headed Varaha. **Cave 15**, or Dashavatara, also has superb sculptural depictions. **Cave 21**, or Rameshvara, and **Cave 29**, or Dhumar Lena, are other impressive caves.

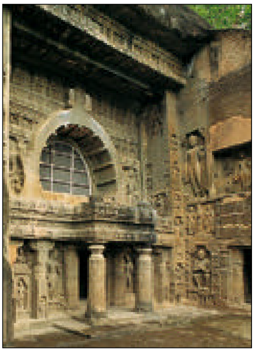
The **Jain Caves** (30 to 34) date from Ellora's last stage, in the 9th century, and are simpler than the Hindu ones. **Cave 32**, or Indra Sabha, is the finest of the group. A monolithic shrine, it has carvings of elephants, lions and *tirthankaras (see p396)* on the courtyard walls. **Cave 30**, or Chhota Kailasa, is a small, incomplete replica of the Kailasanatha Temple *(see pp476–7)* and has sculptures of various *tirthankaras* and Mahavira on a lion-throne.

Environs

The 18th-century **Grishneshvara Temple**, nearby, is one of the 12 *jyotirlinga* shrines dedicated to Shiva, built by Rani Ahilyabai of Indore *(see p250)*.

The upper-storey hall, Vishwakarma (Cave 10)

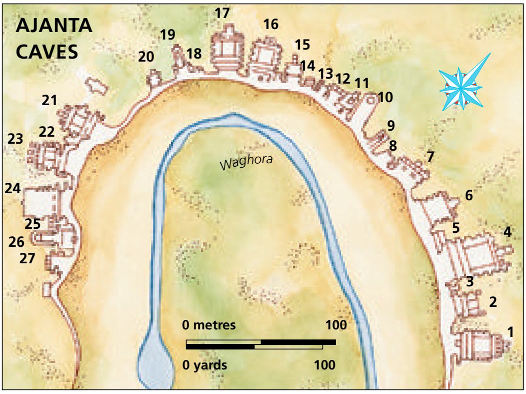




Façade of Cave 19, Ajanta, with a large horseshoe-shaped window

Ajanta ⑭

Aurangabad district. 110 km (68 miles) NE of Aurangabad. 🚌 *from Aurangabad.* ○ *Tue–Sun.* 📷 📷 *flash photography is prohibited.* 🔒 🍴 ✋ *Organized tours & taxis are also available from Aurangabad. Take a packed lunch, bottled water, torch, and wear comfortable shoes and a sun hat.*



A UNESCO World Heritage Site, the 30 extraordinary rock-cut caves at Ajanta lie within a horseshoe-shaped escarpment, overlooking the narrow Waghora river gorge. At its head is a waterfall that drops into the Saptakunda pool. The caves were occupied for only a short period and, over time, the surrounding jungle concealed their existence. They were "rediscovered" quite accidentally in 1819, when John Smith, of the 28th Madras Cavalry, suddenly saw the top of the façade of Cave 10 while on a tiger hunt.

Ajanta's caves fall into two groups. The early group belongs to the more austere Hinayana phase of Buddhism (2nd–1st century BC), during which the Buddha was not represented in human form but only by symbols such as a Wheel of Law or a Bodhi Tree. The second group dates from the Mahayana period (5th–6th centuries AD), carved out during the rule of the Vakataka dynasty, when artistic expression was more exuberant. The caves were inhabited by monks, artists and craftsmen, who used them as *varshvatikas* or monsoon shrines. Stylistically they are of two types – *chaitya grihas* (prayer halls) and *viharas* (monasteries). The *chaityas* have vaulted ceilings and octagonal columns that divide the space into a central hall with a votive stupa, the object of veneration. The side aisles that run around the hall were used for ritual circumambulation. The Mahayana *chaityas* also have Buddha images. *Viharas* typically have a verandah, a hall surrounded by cells, and an inner shrine with enormous Buddha figures.

Of the seven Mahayana caves, dating from the 5th century AD, **Cave 1** is famous for its splendid murals *(see pp480–81)*. Above its verandah are friezes of scenes from the Buddha's life, while its ceiling is supported by 20 carved and painted pillars. **Cave 2** has a superb façade carved with images of Naga kings, and their attendants *(ganas)*, while its main shrine has a magnificent painted ceiling.

Caves 8, 9, 10, 12, 13 and 15 are Hinayana caves. **Cave 9**, a *chaitya griha*, has a façade adorned with windows and lattice-work. The large Buddha figures along the sides were a later addition (5th century) and its murals are from both periods. **Cave 10** is thought to be Ajanta's oldest cave and is one of its finest *chaitya grihas.*

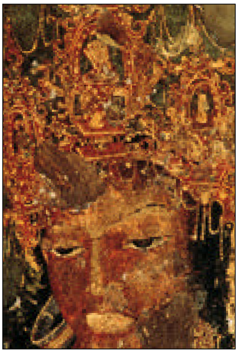
Caves 15 to 20 are late 5th-century Mahayana caves. **Cave 16** has sculptures of beautiful maidens flanking the doorway, while in **Cave 17** the entrance to the inner shrine is ornamented with Buddha figures, goddesses and lotuses.

Caves 21 to 27 (7th century), make up the final group. **Cave 26** displays the full magnificence of Ajanta's sculptural art. Especially remarkable are two splendid panels – one depicts the Temptation of the Buddha by the Demon Mara, while the **Parinirvana** is a 7-m (23-ft) image of the reclining Buddha, with his eyes closed as if in sleep. His disciples mourn his passing, while above, celestial beings rejoice in his salvation.

The moving Parinirvana, depicting the passing of the Buddha, Cave 26

The Ajanta Murals

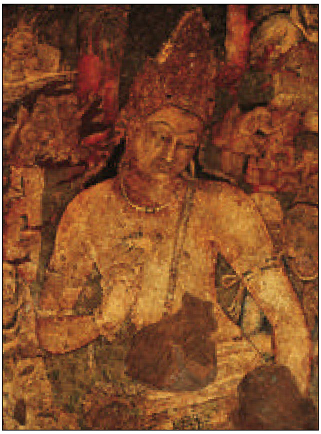
The earliest and finest examples of Buddhist painting in India can be seen at the Ajanta caves. Executed between the 2nd century BC and the 5th century AD, the murals show scenes from the Buddha's life, and from the Jataka Tales, which recount stories of the Buddha's previous incarnations as an enlightened being or Bodhisattva. Magnificent, detailed compositions, the murals include depictions of court scenes, princes and musicians, and offer fascinating glimpses of daily life in the 5th century. The colours, derived from plants and minerals, are in rich shades of ochre, lime, black, green and lapis lazuli.



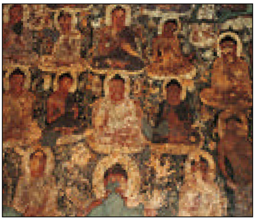
Avalokitesvara, *also identified as Vajrapani, is the most venerated Bodhisattva in the Mahayana pantheon, and can be seen to the right of the antechamber doorway.*

CAVE 1

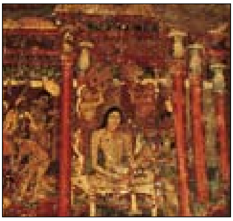
This late 5th-century *vihara* (monastery) contains some of Ajanta's most evocative murals.



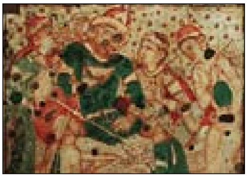
Padmapani *(Lotus-Holder), the Bodhisattva of Compassion, can be seen on the wall to the left of the antechamber doorway. He is surrounded by celestial beings and air-borne figures.*



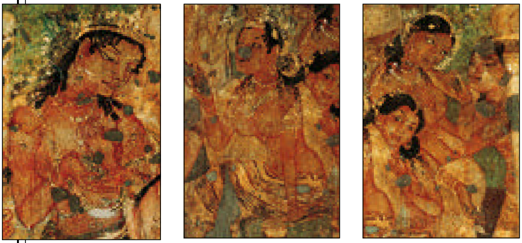
The Miracle of Sravasti, *on the antechamber's right wall, depicts a famous miracle when the Buddha multiplied himself a thousand-fold.*

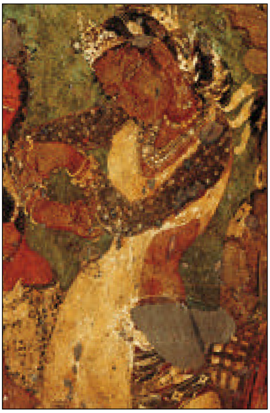


The *Mahajanaka Jataka*, *to the left of the antechamber, recounts the life of Prince Mahajanaka, who renounced the world to become an ascetic. Here, the prince is surrounded by female attendants.*

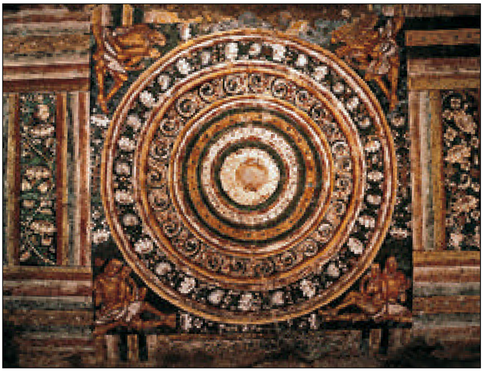


A scene depicting a king, possibly the Vakataka ruler Harisena, greeting a Persian embassy





Scenes from the *Mahajanaka Jataka*, *from left to right, depict Prince Mahajanaka, Queen Shivali enticing the prince, palace maids, and a dancing girl.*



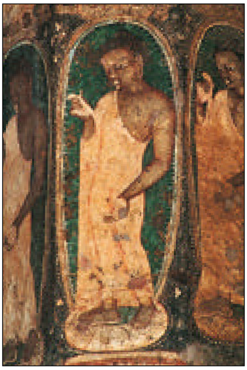
CAVE 2

Similar in design to Cave 1, this 5th-century *vihara* is profusely painted in lustrous colours. The walls, columns, capitals and ceiling are covered in scrollwork, geometric and floral patterns, and numerous Jataka panels, including stories connected with the Buddha's birth.

The large mandala *(circular diagram) dominates the elaborately painted ceiling of this remarkable cave. A depiction of the cosmos, its outer ring is filled with lotus motifs.*

CAVE 10

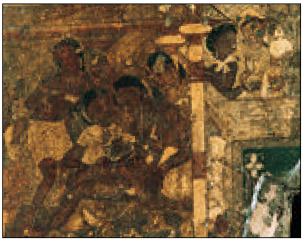
Considered to be Ajanta's oldest cave, this *chaitya griha* dates to the 2nd century BC. The left wall has its oldest mural, a frieze depicting a prince worshipping a Bodhi Tree.



Numerous figures of the Buddha *embellish some of the octagonal pillars (39 in all), that separate the aisles from the central nave in Cave 10.*

CAVE 16

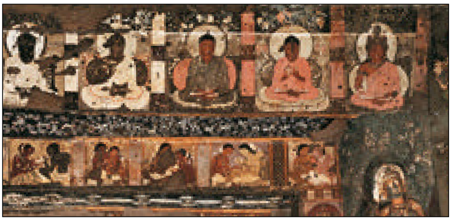
Outstanding paintings in this cave depict the conversion of Nanda, the Buddha's half-brother, and show his wife swooning when she hears the news of his becoming a monk.



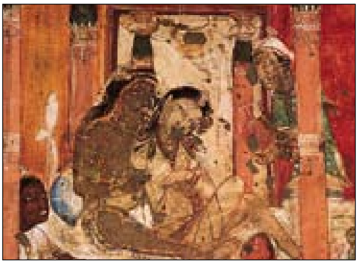
Nanda's wife, Sundari, fainting upon hearing of his conversion

CAVE 17

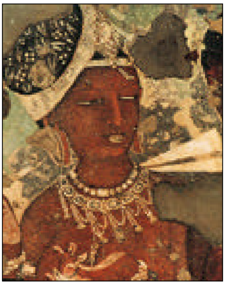
This cave has the largest number of paintings. Among the finest are a vast panel depicting Simhala's shipwreck and encounter with a man-eating ogress; and a lady at her toilet, gazing intently into a mirror.



Eight seated Buddha figures *are depicted above the doorway in the verandah, with a row of amorous couples directly below them.*



A panel from the *Visvantara Jataka*, *to the left of the doorway, depicts Prince Visvantara and his wife drinking wine. They then move to the city gate and give alms to the needy.*



This detail of an *apsara* *(celestial maiden) adoring the Buddha, is part of a larger mural on the verandah to the right of the door. The Ajanta murals are renowned for their exquisite portrayal of women.*

The enormous meteorite crater at Lonar, partially filled by a lake

Lonar ⑮

Buldana district. 130 km (81 miles) E of Aurangabad. 🚉 *Jalna, 83 km (52 miles) W of Lonar, then bus.* 🚌 *from Aurangabad, taxis also available.*

The tiny village of Lonar, is famous for its remarkable meteorite crater. Thought to be the only hyper-velocity impact crater in basaltic rock in the world, the mammoth crater, 2 km (1.3 miles) in diameter and 700 m (2,297 ft) deep, is estimated to be about 50,000 years old. Scientists believe that the meteorite is still buried beneath the southeastern edge of the crater. A lake fills the bottom and the ruins of some Hindu temples stand on its shores. The crater is rich in birdlife, and monkeys and herds of deer can also be seen. There are a few rest houses that offer rooms and the village has some eateries as well.

Melghat Tiger Reserve ⑯

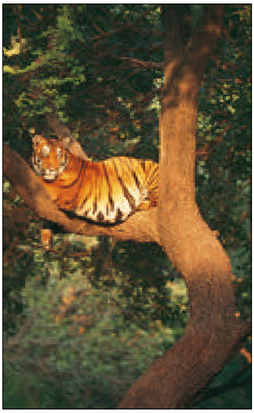
Amravati district. 400 km (249 miles) NE of Aurangabad. 🚉 *Amravati, 100 km (62 miles) SE of entry point. Maharashtra Tourism, organizes buses or jeeps from Amravati to the park.* ℹ *For bookings contact the Field Director, (0721) 266 2792.* ○ *Dec–May.* 🎫

The Project Tiger Reserve of Melghat, which means "Meeting Place of the Ghats", spreads across the Gawilgarh Hills in the southern part of the Satpura Mountains. Its highest altitudes are approximately 1,178 m (3,865 ft) above sea level. These hills have a dense canopy of the country's finest deciduous teak and bamboo forests, which are now threatened by rampant commercial exploitation for timber. Along with its elusive 73 tigers, the reserve is home to about 80 leopards, *chausingha* (four-horned antelope), *dhole* (Indian wild dog), jungle cats, hyenas and a rich variety of birds. The sanctuary also supports the state's largest concentration of *gaur*, the endangered Indian bison.

The best time to visit is between January and April, when the park is pleasantly cool. Its five rivers, the Khandu, Khapra, Sipna, Garga and Dolar, dry out in summer, and the few remaining pools of rainwater are highly prized as watering holes.

Environs

Chikhaldhara, lying 25 km (16 miles) northeast of Melghat, is a quaint hill station established by the British in 1839.



A tiger resting in a tree at the Melghat Tiger Reserve

Nagpur ⑰

Nagpur district. 520 km (323 miles) NE of Aurangabad. 👥 *2,051,500.* ✈ *10 km (6 miles) S of city centre, then bus or taxi.* 🚉 🚌 ℹ *Maharashtra Tourism, (0712) 253 3325.* 🎉 *Pola (Jun/Jul), Kalidasa Festival (Nov).*

Situated on the banks of the Nag river, Nagpur was the capital of the Central Provinces until it became part of Maharashtra state after Independence. It is a fast developing industrial city lying on India's main north-south railway line and is also the country's orange-growing capital. Historically, it was the capital of the aboriginal Gond tribals until it was captured by the Maratha Bhonsles *(see p468)* in 1740, and finally by the British in 1861.

In October 1956, the city witnessed an event of great social importance, when Dr BR Ambedkar, writer of the Indian Constitution and a freedom fighter born into a lower caste Hindu family, converted to Buddhism in a stand against the rigid Hindu caste system. Nearly 200,000 people followed him, and the movement gathered great momentum, resulting in about three million conversions.

Nagpur town is built around **Sitabaldi Fort**, which is encircled by a deep moat. It is open to the public only on 26 January and 15 August. In the eastern part of the city are the remains of the **Bhonsle Palace**, which was destroyed by fire in 1864. South of the old city lie the **Chhatris**, or memorials of the Bhonsle kings, while a number of colonial buildings are situated in the western part of Nagpur. Among the most noteworthy are the High Court (1737–42) and the Anglican Cathedral of All Saints (1851).

Environs

Ramtek, 40 km (25 miles) northeast of Nagpur, is associated with the 14-year exile of Rama, Sita and Lakshman, as told in the epic *Ramayana (see p27)*. It was the capital of the Vakataka dynasty between the 4th and the 6th centuries, and the fort on the Hill of

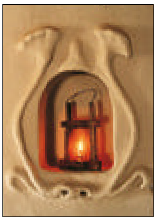
Baskets of juicy oranges on sale in Nagpur's thriving market

Rama dates to this period. Its walls, however, were built in 1740, by the founder of Nagpur's Bhonsle dynasty, Raghoji I. There are also temples dedicated to Rama and Sita, dating to the 5th century.

Wardha ⓲

Wardha district. 493 km (306 miles) NW of Aurangabad. 🚆 🚌 *from Nagpur to Wardha, then bus or auto to Sevagram.* ***Tel*** *(07152) 284 753.*

Most visitors to Wardha are en route to Mahatma Gandhi's historic **Sevagram Ashram**, now a national institution, 8 km (5 miles) northwest of Wardha town. Established by Gandhi in 1933, Sevagram ("Village of Service") was based on Gandhi's philosophy of rural economic development. It became the headquarters of India's National Movement, where Gandhi lived and worked for more than 15 years. Spread over 40 ha (99 acres) of farmland, the ashram has numerous *kutirs* or rural dwellings and several research centres. Gandhi's personal effects, such as his spinning wheel and spectacles, are on display, and khadi, the coarse home-spun cotton that Gandhi made famous as the symbol of India's freedom struggle, is also on sale. A photo exhibit opposite the main entrance depicts scenes from Gandhi's life, while a hospital catering to the needs of local villagers, is located on the main road. Prayers are held daily at 4.30am and 6pm under a pipal tree planted by Gandhi, which visitors can attend.



An oil lamp in a niche, Sevagram

Environs

The ashram of Gandhi's disciple, Vinobha Bhave, is 10 km (6 miles) north of Sevagram at **Paunar**. Bhave started the successful Bhoodan Movement (which literally means "land donation") that sought to persuade wealthy landowners to give portions of their holdings to the poor.

Pandharpur ⓳

Sholapur district. 250 km (155 miles) SE of Pune. 👥 *91,500.* 🚆 🚌 ℹ *Ashadh Ekadashi Fair (Jul).*

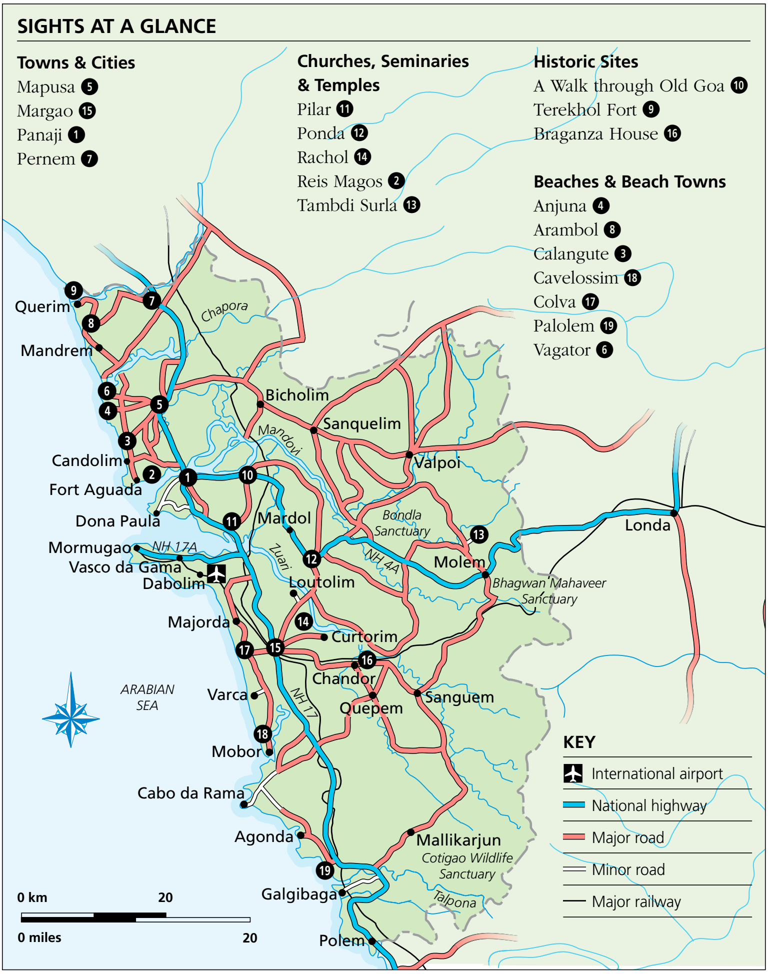
The spiritual capital of Maharashtra, Pandharpur is situated on the banks of the Chandrabhaga river and is the site of the sacred shrine of Vithoba, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. The temple was built in 1228 and is the focal point of a sacred pilgrimage which draws thousands of Varakaris (members of one of the state's most popular religious sects) here every July to attend the Ashadh Ekadashi fair. *Dindis* or group processions travel to Pandharpur from every village in the area, accompanied by devotional singing. The river front, lined with numerous bathing ghats, comes alive with crowds of people, who gather here for their ritual dip.

The spartan interior of Mahatma Gandhi's ashram at Sevagram, near Wardha

GOA

This tiny state, along the Konkan Coast, covers 3,702 sq km (1,429 sq miles) and consists of just two districts, North and South Goa. Goa's distinct culture is a legacy of its colonial past. In 1510, Alfonso de Albuquerque established a small but powerful Portuguese enclave here. Though Goa became a part of the Indian Union in 1961, evidence of the 400-odd years of Portuguese rule is still apparent in the people's dress, language, religion and cuisine, and in their music, a fusion of the plaintive *fado* with the lilting rhythms of local Konkani folk songs. Today, Goa is one of India's most popular holiday destinations, with its idyllic beaches, lush paddy fields, coconut plantations and villages dotted with pretty whitewashed churches and grand mansions. Its other attractions include the Hindu temples around Ponda, built between the 15th and 18th centuries, and the magnificent cathedrals of Old Goa. Goa's friendly, easy-going people go out of their way to make visitors feel at home.

SIGHTS AT A GLANCE



Towns & Cities
- Mapusa ❺
- Margao ⑮
- Panaji ❶
- Pernem ❼

Churches, Seminaries & Temples
- Pilar ⑪
- Ponda ⑫
- Rachol ⑭
- Reis Magos ❷
- Tambdi Surla ⑬

Historic Sites
- A Walk through Old Goa ⑩
- Terekhol Fort ❾
- Braganza House ⑯

Beaches & Beach Towns
- Anjuna ❹
- Arambol ❽
- Calangute ❸
- Cavelossim ⑱
- Colva ⑰
- Palolem ⑲
- Vagator ❻

KEY
- International airport
- National highway
- Major road
- Minor road
- Major railway

9
Querim
8
7
Chapora
Mandrem
6
4
5
3
Bicholim
Sanquelim
Mandovi
Candolim
2
Valpoi
1
10
Fort Aguada
Dona Paula
11
Mardol
Bondla Sanctuary
13
Mormugao
NH 17A
Zuari
NH 4A
12
Molem
Londa
Vasco da Gama
Dabolim
Loutolim
Bhagwan Mahaveer Sanctuary
Majorda
14
Curtorim
17
15
16
Chandor
ARABIAN SEA
Varca
NH 17
Sanguem
Quepem
18
Mobor
Cabo da Rama
Agonda
Mallikarjun
Cotigao Wildlife Sanctuary
19
Talpona
0 km
20
Galgibaga
0 miles
20
Polem

◁ **Coconut groves and rice fields surrounding a village chapel in Goa**

Panaji ①

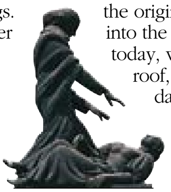
Goa's capital, Panaji, situated at the mouth of the Mandovi river, is reminiscent of a provincial Mediterranean town. Earlier a port of the Adil Shahi kings of Bijapur *(see p542)*, it became a military landing stage and warehouse after the arrival of the Portuguese in 1510. In 1759, after a series of epidemics in Old Goa, the viceroy was forced to move his residence to Panaji, or Panjim as it was then called. However, it was only in 1843 that the town became the official capital of Portuguese territories in India. Today, Panaji has a relaxed and friendly ambience, especially along the leafy avenues of the old town *(see pp488–9)*. The newer commercial hub, laid out on a grid, has concrete structures interspersed with colonial buildings and churches.

Secretariat

Avenida Dom Joao Crasto. ***Tel*** *(0832) 222 2701.* ○ *Mon–Fri.*

The river front Secretariat housing the State Legislative Assembly, is one of Panaji's oldest buildings. It was once the summer palace of Yusuf Adil Shah, Goa's 16th-century Muslim ruler, and fell to the Portuguese in 1510, despite a formidable battery of 55 cannons and a salt-water moat that protected it.

Rebuilt in 1615, its strategic location made it a point of entry for ships and a stopover for viceroys and governors en route to Old Goa *(see p501)*. In 1760, after Old Goa was abandoned in favour of Panaji, the Idalcaon's Palace (a corruption of Adil Shah's or Khan's Palace), as it was then known, became the official residence of the viceroys – until 1918, when the residence moved to the Cabo Palace, southwest of Panaji. Extensive renovations have transformed the original Islamic structure into the colonial building it is today, with a sloping tiled roof, wide wooden verandahs and cast-iron pillars. The Ashoka Chakra and the Buddhist Wheel of Law, the emblems of the Indian government, have replaced the Portuguese viceroys' coat of arms, above the entrance to the building.



The 19th-century statue of Abbé de Faria

Standing west of the Secretariat is the arresting statue of Abbé de Faria. This Goan priest, who was born in Candolim in 1756, underwent theological training in Rome. After his ordination, he moved to Paris, where he won acclaim as the father of modern hypnosis.

The Church of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception

Church of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception

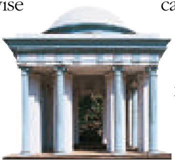
Church Square. ***Tel*** *(0832) 242 6939.* ○ *daily.* ✝ *(English) 8am, Mon–Sat; 8.30am, Sun.*

Overlooking Largo da Igreja or "Church Square", Panaji's main square, is the Church of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, the town's most important landmark. Portuguese sailors used to come to the original chapel, consecrated in 1541, to offer thanksgiving prayers after their long and treacherous voyage from Lisbon.

The present church, with its Baroque façade framed by twin towers, was built in 1619. Its most striking feature, the double flight of stairs leading up to the church, was added in 1871. The central pediment was built at the same

View of the the riverside Secretariat at Panaji, with its tiled roof and colonial façade

time, as was the belfry to accommodate the huge bell brought from Old Goa's Augustinian monastery *(see p496)*. The chapel in the south transept has fine reredos (altar panels) retrieved from the viceroy's chapel in the Secretariat. The Baroque splendour of the main altar and the two transept altars is in sharp contrast to the otherwise simple interior.


The central pavilion, Azad Maidan

Menezes Braganza Institute

Malaca Rd. ***Tel*** *(0832) 222 4143.* ○ *Mon–Fri.*

An excellent example of 19th-century Portuguese civic architecture, the Institute Vasco da Gama was built to impart knowledge in the arts and sciences. It was later renamed after the philanthropist Luis de Menezes Braganza (1878–1938), whose family home is in Chandor *(see p508).*

Today, this is Goa's Central Library, with a good collection of rare books. The superb mural in blue painted ceramic tiles *(azulezos)* was added to the entrance lobby in 1935, and depicts scenes from the epic *Os Lusiadas* (Lusiada, meaning the "people of Portugal", is derived from Lusitania, Portugal's old name). Written by the 16th-century Portuguese poet, Luis Vaz de Camões, this recounts the history of the Portuguese presence in Goa. The institute used to have an art gallery with works by late 19th- and early 20th-century European artists. These exhibits are now housed in the State Museum.

The grassy square in front of the Institute, **Azad Maidan**, is lined on one side by the Police Headquarters, built in 1832 with stones from Old Goa's abandoned buildings. The pavilion in the centre was made in 1847, using Corinthian pillars taken from a Dominican church, dating to the mid-16th century. Inside, a memorial to the freedom fighter, Dr Tristao de Braganza Cunha, has replaced an earlier statue of the first viceroy, Alfonso de Albuquerque, now in the Archaeological Museum in Old Goa *(see p500).*

State Museum

Patto. ***Tel*** *(0832) 243 8006.*
○ *Mon–Fri.* ● *public hols.*

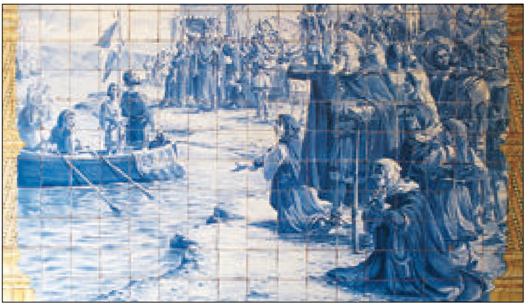
This museum houses a rather modest collection of pre-colonial artifacts, including statues, *sati* stones, antique furniture and carvings from ravaged Hindu temples, as well as some Christian icons.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

North Goa district (Tiswadi taluka). 588 km (365 miles) S of Mumbai 👥 *58,800.* ✈ *Dabolim, 30 km (19 miles) S of town centre, then bus or taxi.* 🚉 *Margao, 33 km (21 miles) SE of town centre.* ℹ *GTDC Trionora Apartments, (0832) 222 6515.* 🎉 *Feast of Our Lady (Dec); Carnival (Feb).*

Environs

Panaji's nearest beach, **Miramar**, is 3 km (2 miles) west. **Dona Paula**,7 km (4 miles) southwest of Panaji, is near the headland dividing the estuaries of the Zuari and Mandovi rivers. It is named after a viceroy's daughter who, the story goes, jumped into the sea when she wasn't allowed to marry a local fisherman. The jetty offers fine views of Fort Aguada across the bay. Jet skis are available for rent and visitors can also take a ferry-ride to Vasco da Gama harbour.

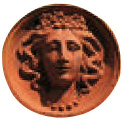

A scene from *Os Lusiadas*, depicting Vasco da Gama's arrival in Goa

GOAN RIVER CRUISES

A delightful way to spend an evening in Goa is to take one of the many sunset cruises along the Mandovi river, organized by the Goa Tourism Development Corporation, (0832) 222 6728, and also by private operators. Most of the cruises begin from the jetty at the foot of Mandovi bridge, every day between 6 and 7pm (tickets are available at the jetty). Entertainment is provided by troupes of Goan dancers and musicians. On full moon nights, an excellent dinner is also provided on board. Some operators, such as Sea Adventure, (0832) 255 0705, organize specialized tours through the backwaters, a vibrant mangrove habitat and home to marsh crocodiles and migratory birds. Focussing on culture and food, Spice Villages, (0832) 234 4268, takes visitors to the sylvan settings of spice plantations, which attract flocks of beautiful birds.

An evening cruise down the Mandovi river

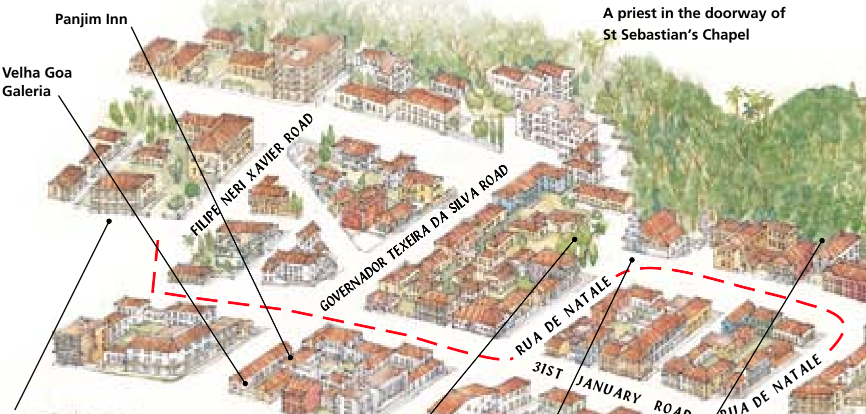
Street-by-Street: Panaji Old Town



Terracotta medallion

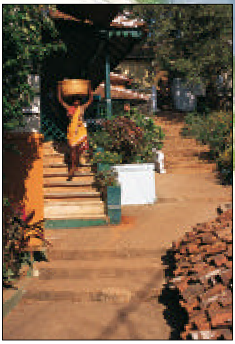
Tucked away between Ourem Creek and Altinho Hill in Panaji are the old residential quarters of Fontainhas and São Tomé, built on reclaimed land in the 19th century. Fontainhas was named after the fountain of Phoenix, a spring that provided the quarter's only source of water, while São Tomé takes its name from the São Tomé Church. This old-world precinct, characterized by a jumble of painted, tile-roofed houses, has streets lined with taverns offering authentic Goan cuisine and *feni* (cashewnut liqueur), and bakeries serving *bebinca*, the delicious local cake. Many of the residents still speak Portuguese.

A priest in the doorway of St Sebastian's Chapel


Panjim Inn
Velha Goa Galeria
FILIPE NERI XAVIER ROAD
GOVERNADOR TEXEIRA DA SILVA ROAD
RUA DE NATALE
31ST JANUARY ROAD
RUA DE NATALE
CORTE DE OITERO
RUA DE OUREM
Dr Arminio Ribeiro de Santana Mansion

★ Fundação de Oriente
Originally a family home, it now houses a Portuguese foundation that promotes artistic, cultural and scientific work. Its library is open to the public.

★ St Sebastian's Chapel
The chapel, built in 1888, has a life-size crucifix that used to hang in the Palace of the Inquisition in Old Goa.

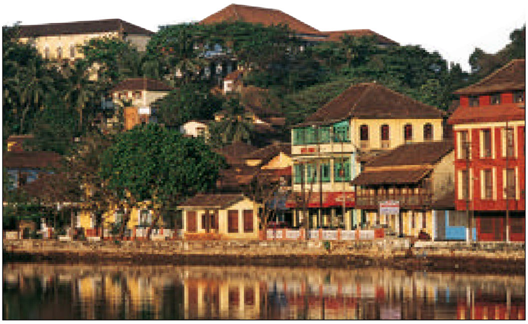


★ Rua de Natale
This road snakes up Altinho Hill and has steps laid out to help pedestrians negotiate the gentle climb.

STAR SIGHTS

- ★ Fundação de Oriente
- ★ St Sebastian's Chapel
- ★ Rua de Natale

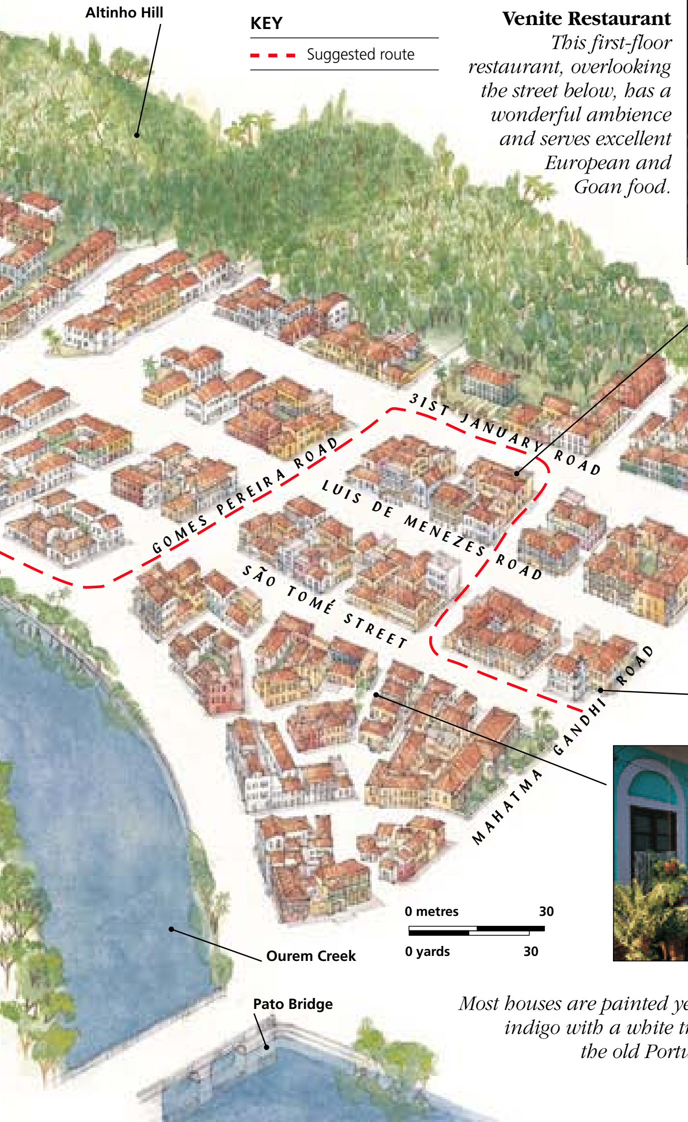
For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp709–11 and pp737–8



Ourem Creek
The picturesque Rua de Ourem faces Ourem Creek. Behind it, colourful houses dot the slopes all the way up Altinho Hill.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Fontainhas & São Tomé. **St Sebastian's Chapel** ○ *am only.* **São Tomé Church** ○ *am only.* **Fundação de Oriente Library** ***Tel*** *(0832) 243 6108.* ○ *Sun–Fri.* **Velha Goa Galeria** ***Tel*** *(0832) 242 6628.* ○ *Mon–Sat.*


Altinho Hill
KEY
Suggested route
31ST JANUARY ROAD
GOMES PEREIRA ROAD
LUIS DE MENEZES ROAD
SÃO TOMÉ STREET
MAHATMA GANDHI ROAD
Ourem Creek
Pato Bridge
0 metres 30
0 yards 30

Venite Restaurant
This first-floor restaurant, overlooking the street below, has a wonderful ambience and serves excellent European and Goan food.

São Tomé, a tiny church built in 1849, was once the focus of a busy square. The nearby Mint marks the Inquisition's execution site.

Streetscape
Most houses are painted yellow, ochre, green or indigo with a white trim – in keeping with the old Portuguese building code.

Reredos behind the main altar, Reis Magos Church

Reis Magos ❷

North Goa district (Bardez taluka). 3 km (2 miles) NW of Panaji. 🚌
Feast of Three Kings (Jan).

The fort at Reis Magos as built in 1551 by Don Alfonso de Noronha, the fifth viceroy, as a second line of defence after the forts at Aguada and Cabo (the tip of Dona Paula). It once housed a prison, which was moved to Mormugao in 1996. Adjacent to the fort is the Reis Magos Church. Constructed in 1555, this is one of Goa's earliest churches, and has the royal Portuguese coat of arms on its façade.

Soccer game in progress, Calangute

Environs

Fort Aguada, 4 km (2.5 miles) west of Reis Magos, was built in 1612 as a defence against the Marathas and the Dutch. Its church, dedicated to St Lawrence, the patron saint of sailors, was built in 1630, while the huge lighthouse dates to 1864. Some buildings within the fort now house the state prison. The local beach, Sinquerim, is known for its luxury resorts.

Calangute ❸

North Goa district (Bardez taluka). 16 km (10 miles) NW of Panaji. 🚌 ℹ
GTDC Tourist Resort, (0832) 227 6024.

The centre of the hippie scene in the 1960s and 1970s, Calangute is Goa's most popular beach. During the day, it is packed with sunbathers, hawkers, masseurs, hair-braiders and ear-cleaners. The entire stretch of sand right up to the adjacent Baga Beach is lined with resorts, trinket stalls, bars and beach shacks such as Reggie's Bar and Souza Lobo *(see p738)*, which serve excellent Goan food. **Atlantis Water Sports**, offers a diverse range of water sports. Rides on fishing boats are also available at bargain prices. Calangute's church, **St Alex**, topped by a large dome, is on the road to Mapusa. Its Rococo-style white-and-gold interior has pretty, shell-shaped niches.

Atlantis Water Sports
Calangute. ***Tel*** *09890-47272.*

Environs

Extending north of Calangute, **Baga Beach** is far less crowded, although its expanse of soft, white sand has its share of guesthouses and bars. It hosts the leisurely Saturday Night Ingo's Bazaar – a great alternative to the Wednesday market at nearby Anjuna. Tito's Bar, which has the only dance floor on the entire beach, is the hub of Baga's nightlife. **Candolim Beach**, 2.5 km (2 miles) south of Calangute, stretches all the way to Fort Aguada. Popular with large tour groups, the once peaceful waters now resound with the whir of speedboats and jet skis. **Saligao**, 2 km (1.3 miles) east of Calangute, has the pretty Church of Mae de Deus, in Neo-Gothic style, as well as a seminary which prepares boys for theological studies at Rachol Seminary *(see p504)*.

Anjuna ❹

North Goa district (Bardez taluka). 18 km (11 miles) NW of Panaji. 🚌
Flea Market (Wed).

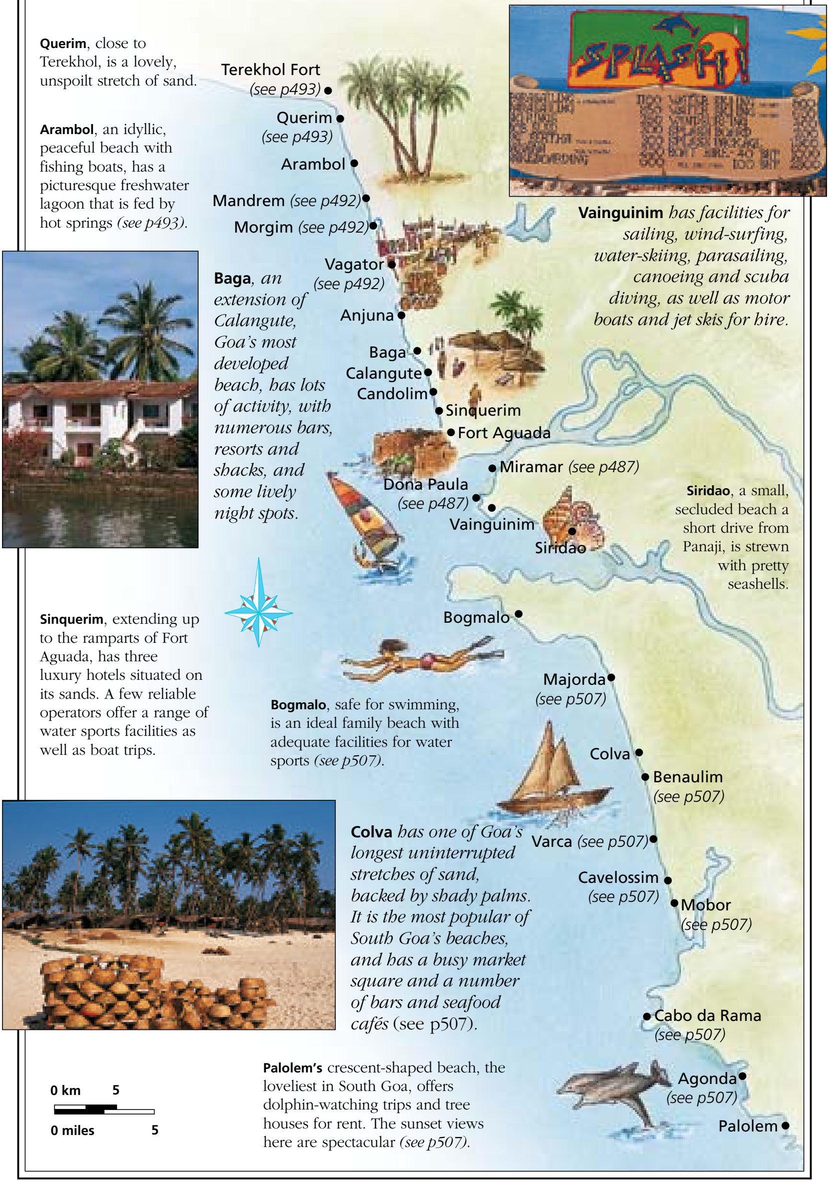
Anjuna has now replaced Calangute as a haven for backpackers. It is better known for its full-moon rave parties and sprawling flea market than for its beach. The popular market, held every Wednesday, is crowded with hawkers from all over India selling everything from Balinese batik, silver jewellery and papier-mâché boxes, to Tibetan prayer wheels, Rajasthani mirrorwork and Kerala woodcarvings. Fluorescent rave gear and trendy beachwear round off the selection, while added attractions are performing monkeys and fortune-telling Nandi bulls.

A woman selling sarongs at the Anjuna flea market

Beaches and Beach Life

Visitor under a beach umbrella

Goa's splendid beaches stretch over 106 km (66 miles), from Querim in the north to Mobor in the south. Each beach has its distinct character, though in general, South Goa's beaches are far less developed than those in North Goa, and have only recently become popular as tourist destinations. To cater to the growing number of visitors, many beaches now have shacks serving beer, snacks and seafood, lively flea markets, and vendors offering a variety of services from head massages to dolphin-watching trips.


SPLASH!
Terekhol Fort (see p493)
Querim (see p493)
Arambol
Mandrem (see p492)
Morgim (see p492)
Vagator (see p492)
Anjuna
Baga
Calangute
Candolim
Sinquerim
Fort Aguada
Miramar (see p487)
Dona Paula (see p487)
Vainguinim
Siridao
Bogmalo
Majorda (see p507)
Colva
Benaulim (see p507)
Varca (see p507)
Cavelossim (see p507)
Mobor (see p507)
Cabo da Rama (see p507)
Agonda (see p507)
Palolem
0 km 5
0 miles 5

Querim, close to Terekhol, is a lovely, unspoilt stretch of sand.

Arambol, an idyllic, peaceful beach with fishing boats, has a picturesque freshwater lagoon that is fed by hot springs *(see p493)*.

Vainguinim *has facilities for sailing, wind-surfing, water-skiing, parasailing, canoeing and scuba diving, as well as motor boats and jet skis for hire.*

Baga*, an extension of Calangute, Goa's most developed beach, has lots of activity, with numerous bars, resorts and shacks, and some lively night spots.*

Siridao, a small, secluded beach a short drive from Panaji, is strewn with pretty seashells.

Sinquerim, extending up to the ramparts of Fort Aguada, has three luxury hotels situated on its sands. A few reliable operators offer a range of water sports facilities as well as boat trips.

Bogmalo, safe for swimming, is an ideal family beach with adequate facilities for water sports *(see p507)*.

Colva *has one of Goa's longest uninterrupted stretches of sand, backed by shady palms. It is the most popular of South Goa's beaches, and has a busy market square and a number of bars and seafood cafés* (see p507).

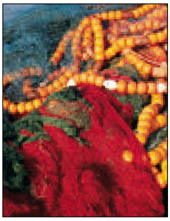
Palolem's crescent-shaped beach, the loveliest in South Goa, offers dolphin-watching trips and tree houses for rent. The sunset views here are spectacular *(see p507)*.

The façade of St Jerome's Church (Our Lady of Miracles), Mapusa

Mapusa ⑤

North Goa district (Bardez taluka).
13 km (8 miles) N of Panaji.
👥 *40,150.* 🚆 🚌 ℹ *GTDC Hotel, (0832) 226 2794.* 🛒 *Fri.* 🎉 *Feast of Our Lady of Miracles (Apr).*

The largest town in northern Goa, Mapusa's main point of interest is the colourful Friday market, with its tantalizing aromas of dried fish, spices, chillies, vinegar, local toddy and the spicy Goan sausages, *chouriça.* The region's famous cashewnuts are also much in demand. Hawkers peddle a range of beachwear, including cheap T-shirts and summer dresses, in the covered colonnades in front of the rows of shops. In the lanes leading off from the main market are stalls selling handicrafts and souvenirs from all over the country.



Brightly coloured fishing nets

St Jerome's Church, also known as the Church of Our Lady of Miracles, was rebuilt twice, first in 1719 and again in 1838, after it was destroyed by fire. Its main altar, with the image of Nossa Senhora de Milagres, has some grand ornamental screens, salvaged from a church in Old Goa.

Interestingly, both Hindus and Catholics celebrate the Feast of Our Lady (held 16 days after Easter) with equal fervour. At the end of the festival Hindu devotees, accompanied by Catholics, take the holy oil from St Jerome's church back to the nearby Shanteri Temple.

Environs

Mayem Lake, 14 km (9 miles) southeast of Mapusa, is an ideal picnic spot, with boating facilities and a good resort.

Vagator ⑥

North Goa district (Bardez taluka).
17 km (11 miles) N of Panaji.
🚌 *Chapora village.*

A beautiful bay sheltered by rocky outcrops at both ends, Vagator consists of a number of small beaches fringed by shady coconut palms. Rarely crowded, it is the perfect place to discover Goa's unspoilt beauty.

The southernmost cove of **Ozran** lies below a steep cliff, where a freshwater stream empties into a clear pool, ideal for swimming. **Little Vagator**, to the north, is a secluded stretch of sand popular with more discerning visitors. **Big Vagator Beach** is dominated by the red laterite **Chapora Fort** situated on top of a hill at its northern tip. Now in ruins, this fort was built by the Portuguese in 1717 on the remains of an older bastion erected by the Adil Shahi sultans. Its name, Chapora, is derived from "Shahpura", or "Town of the Shah", as the village was once known. In 1739, Sambhaji, the son of the Maratha chief Shivaji *(see p471)*, occupied the fort for a short time until it was returned to the Portuguese in exchange for Bassein, near Mumbai. Its ramparts, now desolate, offer sweeping views of the coast. Chapora village, below the fort, has many pleasant cafés.

Environs

The many fishing villages along the northern coastline can only be reached by taking a ferry across the Chapora river from Siolim, 10 km (6 miles) from Chapora village. The area around the village of **Morgim**, 5 km (3 miles) north of Chapora village, is ideal for birdwatching. **Mandrem** is another quiet village with a beautiful location and glorious beach, 12 km (7 miles) north of Chapora village.

Pernem ⑦

North Goa district (Pernem taluka).
29 km (18 miles) N of Panaji.
🚌 ⛴ *every half hour from Siolim.*

The headquarters of Goa's northern most *taluka*, or sub-district, Pernem was occupied by the Portuguese in the mid-18th century. It was one of the last conquests they made between 1764 and 1788 – a period during which they expanded their territory to include Pernem, Bicholim and Satari in the north, and Ponda *(see p502)*, Sanquem, Quepem and Canacona in the south. By this time, the fevour for conversions that existed during the period of the early conquests had waned, and these areas remained predominantly Hindu.

The brightly painted **Bhagavati Temple**, in the bazaar, stands on a 500-year-old site, although the present

Shack restaurant on Morgim Beach, a common sight in Goa

A fisherman casting his net at Querim Beach

structure dates to the 18th century. It is dedicated to the eight-armed Bhagavati, an incarnation of Shiva's consort Parvati. Its elaborate gateway is framed by two life-size elephants. A short distance from the bazaar is the palatial **Deshprabhu House**, the 19th-century mansion of the wealthy Hindu Deshprabhu family, who fought for Goa's liberation in 1961. This sprawling property, built around 16 courtyards, has a private temple and a museum displaying family portraits and antiques.

Deshaprabhu House
Tel *(0832) 220 1234 to arrange a visit.*

Arambol ⑧

North Goa district (Pernem taluka).
50 km (31 miles) N of Panaji.
🚌 ⛴ *every half hour from Siolim.*

Also known as Harmal, Arambol is the only fishing village in North Goa that has some basic facilities for visitors. Situated along one of Goa's less commercial beaches, it still retains all the charm of a traditional fishing village, except for the occasional gypsy selling bright scarves and skirts. Unlike in central Goa, the Hindu influence is apparent here; the numerous cafés and guesthouses are called Ganesha or Namaste instead of Pete's or Johnny's.

At the northern end, a rocky footpath leads to a second beach, entirely surrounded by cliffs. This sandy cove has a freshwater lagoon fed by hot springs and lined with sulphurous mud. A 5-km (3-mile) long path, heading north, leads to **Querim Beach** (pronounced "keri") – a pristine strip of white sand, backed by casuarina trees.

Terekhol Fort ⑨

North Goa district (Pernem taluka).
42 km (26 miles) N of Panaji. 🚌
⛴ *every half hour from Querim.*

Across the Terekhol river from Querim is the little hamlet of Terekhol, with Terekhol (Tiracol) Fort situated on a plateau above it. The early 18th-century fort was captured by the Portuguese in 1776 from the Bhonsles, a Maratha clan. It was the scene of an uprising in 1954, when a group of *satyagrahis* (freedom fighters) hoisted the Indian flag on its ramparts in an act of civil disobedience against colonial rule. The fort's high battlements face the sea, looking across the waters to Fort Aguada, Arambol and Chapora. The tiny chapel within the fort, with a statue of Christ in the courtyard, is usually closed but the atmospheric Terekhol Fort Heritage Hotel *(see p711)* offers some excellent views.

A holy cross on top of a knoll, Arambol Beach

Carnival king on a float

FESTIVALS OF GOA

Jatra *(Jan)*, Quepem. A colourful festival *(jatra)* honouring local temple deities is celebrated at the Shantadurga Temple *(see p502)*. Other such festivals take place through the year at various temples in Ponda.

Carnival *(Feb)*, Panaji. Goa's grandest festival marks the beginning of Lent. "King Momo", who personifies fun and frolic, orders his subjects to forget their troubles, and leads a colourful parade through the streets. Three days and nights of non-stop revelry follow.

Masked dancers, Carnival

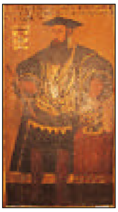
Shigmotsav (Shigmo) *(Mar)*. This joyous Hindu spring festival is celebrated acoss the state. Festivities continue for five days and include colourful street floats (in the larger towns), local folk theatre, sword dances and the lively spraying of coloured powder.

All Saints Procession *(Apr)*, Goa Velha, Pilar. Large crowds of devotees carry statues of 26 saints in procession from St Andrew's Church, in this small village near Pilar.

Feast of St Francis Xavier *(3 Dec)*, Old Goa. The feast of Goa's patron saint is held on the anniversary of his death (1552). Attended by Catholic pilgrims from all over the world, the feast is preceeded by novenas (nine days of prayer).

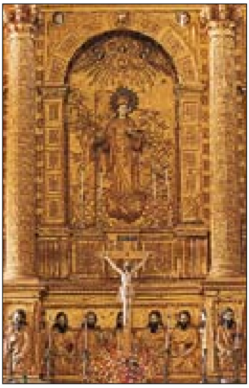
Seagulls flocking around the day's catch at Arambol Beach ▷

A Walk through Old Goa ❿



Portrait of Vasco da Gama

A magnificent complex of cathedrals, churches and monasteries, spread along a 1.5-km (1-mile) stretch, marks the site of Old Goa, the Portuguese capital until the mid-18th century. The walk through this area, now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, takes in two of Goa's most important religious monuments, the Basilica de Bom Jesus and the grand Sé Cathedral, and ends on Holy Hill, where some of Goa's oldest churches are located. Most of these buildings, designed by Italian or Portuguese architects, encompass a range of European styles, from sober Renaissance to exuberant Baroque and Portuguese Manueline *(see p501)*.

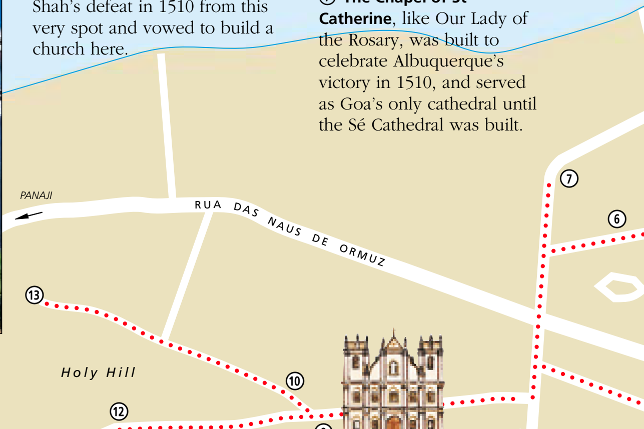


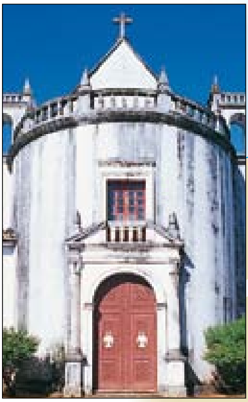
④ **Sé Cathedral**

This is thought to be Asia's largest church. The gilded high altar has six splendid panels depicting the life of St Catherine of Alexandria.

⑬ **Our Lady of the Rosary** was built on top of Holy Hill in 1526 by Alfonso de Albuquerque. He had watched Yusuf Adil Shah's defeat in 1510 from this very spot and vowed to build a church here.

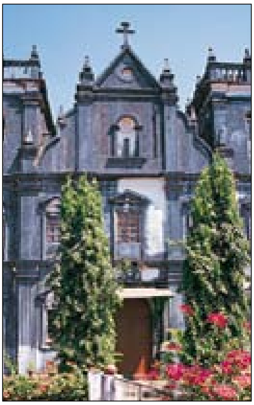
⑦ **The Chapel of St Catherine**, like Our Lady of the Rosary, was built to celebrate Albuquerque's victory in 1510, and served as Goa's only cathedral until the Sé Cathedral was built.





⑫ **Royal Chapel of St Anthony**

St Anthony, Portugal's national saint, was also considered the Captain of the army.



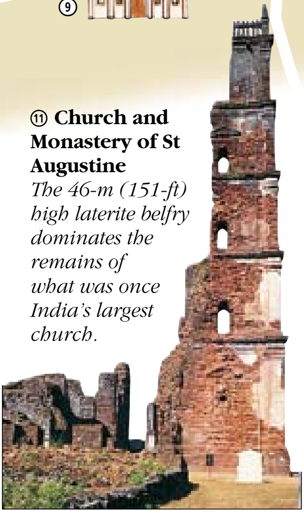
⑩ **Convent of St Monica**, dating to the mid-17th century, will house Asia's first Museum of Christian Art, currently being relocated from Rachol *(see p504)*.

⑨ **Church and Convent of St John of God**

This convent was built in 1685 by the Order of the Hospitallers of St John of God, to tend to the sick. It was rebuilt in 1953.

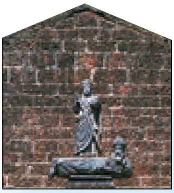
⑪ **Church and Monastery of St Augustine**

The 46-m (151-ft) high laterite belfry dominates the remains of what was once India's largest church.



② Gateway of Adil Shah's Palace

The gate, comprising a lintel and basalt pillars, is all that survives of Adil Shah's palace, also used as the viceroys' residence from 1554 to 1695.

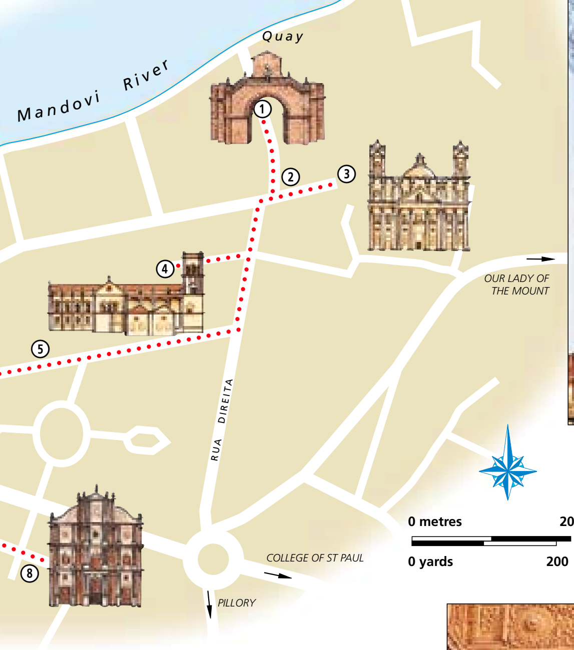


① Viceroy's Arch

Over 1,000 ships a year brought new arrivals to Goa in the 17th century. They passed under this laterite archway, built by Francisco da Gama (viceroy 1597–1600).

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

North Goa district (Tiswadi taluka). 9 km (6 miles) E of Panaji. 🚉 *Karmali, 9 km (6 miles) S of Old Goa.* 🚌 *or taxi from Panaji.* ℹ *GTDC, Old Goa Tourist Hotel, behind Police Station, near MG Statue, (0832) 228 5327.* 🎉 *Feast of St Francis Xavier (3 Dec). The Archaeological Survey of India's booklet on Old Goa is available at the Archaeological Museum.*



③ Church of St Cajetan

Built by Italian friars in 1651, this church is renowned for the exuberant woodcarvings on its high altar and pulpit.

⑧ Basilica de Bom Jesus *(see pp498–9).*

⑤ Church of St Francis of Assisi

Built by the Franciscan friars in 1521, this is one of Old Goa's most important churches. Its carved and gilded main altar depicts the crucified Jesus, four Evangelists, St Francis, and Our Lady with the baby Jesus.

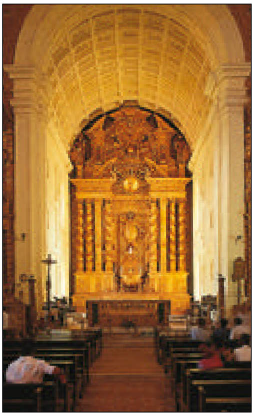
⑥ Archaeological Museum

A bronze statue of the poet Luis Vaz de Camões, holding his epic Os Lusiadas (see p487), *stands in the museum, now housed in the converted convent of St Francis of Assisi, adjoining the church.*

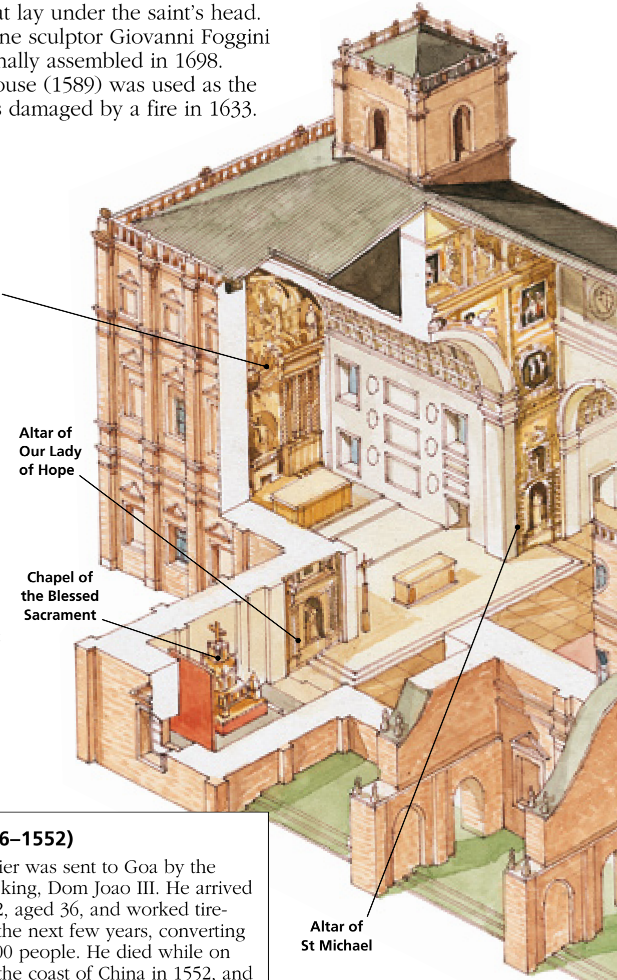
Old Goa: Basilica de Bom Jesus

The Basilica de Bom Jesus is revered by Roman Catholics all over the world since it houses the mortal remains of Goa's patron saint, Francis Xavier. It was the first church in South Asia to be granted the status of Minor Basilica, by Pope Pius XII in 1946. Built by the Jesuits in 1594, this grand Baroque structure blends Corinthian, Doric, Ionic and composite styles in its magnificent three-tiered façade. The Duke of Tuscany, Cosimo III, donated the elaborate tomb of St Francis in exchange for the pillow that lay under the saint's head. The tomb took the Florentine sculptor Giovanni Foggini ten years to build; it was finally assembled in 1698. The adjoining Professed House (1589) was used as the priests' quarters until it was damaged by a fire in 1633.

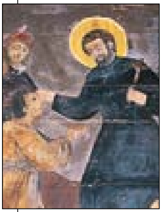
Doorway to Sacristy
An exquisitely carved wooden door leads to the sacristy.



★ Main Altar
The gilded reredos has a statue of St Ignatius of Loyola and another of the Infant Jesus. Local craftsmen, used to decorating temples, made plump, typically Hindu looking cherubs on the altar.


Altar of Our Lady of Hope
Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament
Altar of St Michael

ST FRANCIS XAVIER (1506–1552)

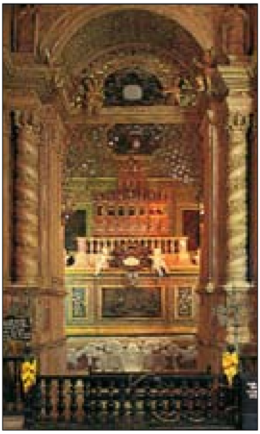


St Francis Xavier, Art Gallery

Francis Xavier was sent to Goa by the Portuguese king, Dom Joao III. He arrived in May 1542, aged 36, and worked tirelessly over the next few years, converting nearly 30,000 people. He died while on voyage off the coast of China in 1552, and was temporarily buried on an island. When his body was dug up three months later to transfer his bones, it showed no signs of decay. A year later, when his remains were enshrined in the Basilica in Goa, his body was still in pristine condition. This was declared a miracle, and in 1622 he was canonized. Expositions of his relics take place every ten years or so, the last one was in 2004–2005.

STAR FEATURES

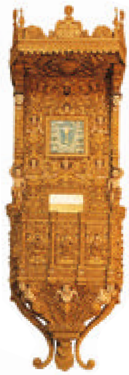
- ★ Main Altar
- ★ Tomb of St Francis Xavier
- ★ Wooden Pulpit



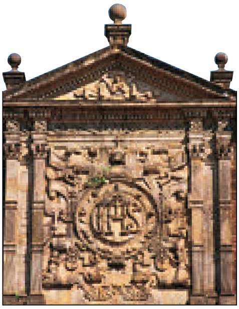
★ Tomb of St Francis Xavier
The marble and jasper tomb has four bronze plaques depicting scenes from the saint's life. Built in a mixture of Italian and Indian styles, the silver reliquary containing the sacred relics is surmounted by a cross with two angels.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

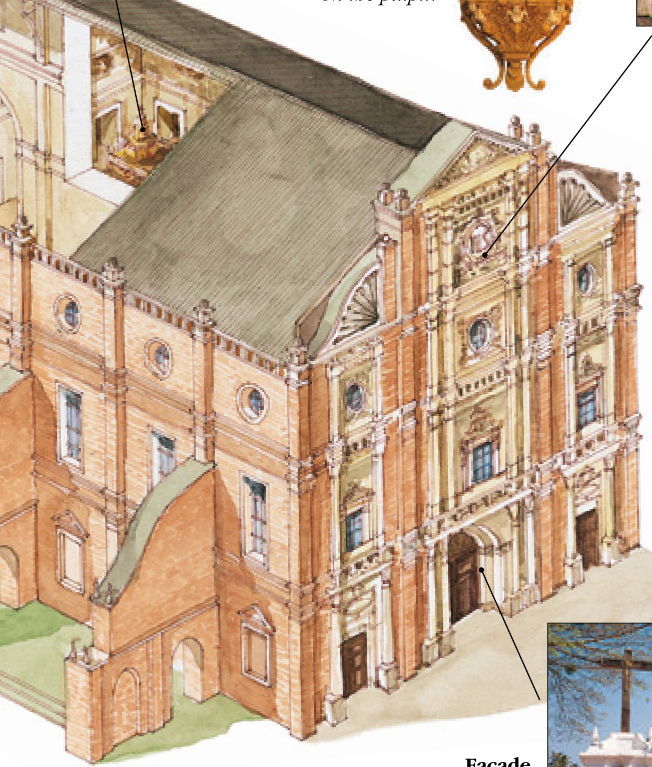
North Goa district (Tiswadi taluka). Rua das Naus de Ormuz, Old Goa. ***Tel*** *(0832) 228 5790.*
○ *daily.* ⊘ *during mass.* 🚻
✝ *All services are in Konkani: 7am & 8am, Mon–Sat; 8am & 9:15am, Sun.*
Art Gallery Professed House.
○ *daily.*

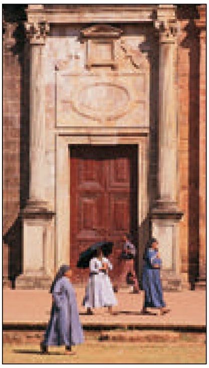


★ Wooden Pulpit
The figures of Jesus and several Evangelists are beautifully carved on the pulpit.



Basalt Stone Tablet
The Jesuit motto, IHS or Iaeus Hominum Salvator, *means "Jesus the Saviour" in Greek.*





Catholic nuns at the entrance to the Basilica

Façade
This is the only Goan church not covered in lime plaster. Its original coat was removed in 1956, exposing the soft red laterite beneath. Each of the three doorways and six windows is flanked by elegant pillars and basalt detailing.

Exploring Old Goa

Portugal's Goa Dourada ("Golden Goa") was once a vast city, inhabited by more than 30,000 people. In the 16th century, it attracted missionaries and soldiers, merchants and horse-traders, and its elegant palaces and mansions were much praised by contemporary visitors. However, by the mid-18th century, a series of epidemics and the silting up of the Mandovi river forced the viceroy to move his residence downstream to Panaji *(see p486)*. Thereafter, decline set in and, by the 19th century, the city was finally abandoned and its houses demolished. Today, Old Goa is a mere shadow of its former self, but the few churches and cathedrals that remain are considered to be among Goa's most significant monuments.

Church of St Cajetan

E of Viceroy's Arch. ○ *daily.*

In the 17th century, Pope Urban III sent Italian priests from the Theatine Order to Golconda *(see pp666–7)*. When refused entry, they settled in Old Goa. Here, in 1651, they erected a church dedicated to their founder, St Cajetan, and designed along the lines of St Peter's in Rome. The distinctive dome and interior, laid out in the shape of a Greek cross, embody the majesty of Italian Baroque. The adjacent monastery is today a college of theology.

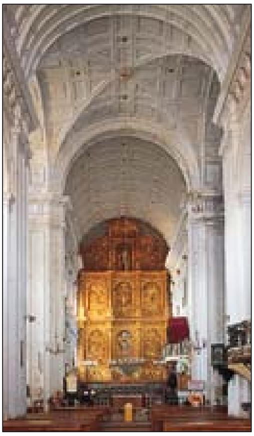
Detail of altar, Churh of St Cajetan

Sé Cathedral

Senate Square. ***Tel*** *(0832) 228 4710.* ○ *daily.* ✝ *(Konkani) 7.30am & 6pm, Mon–Sat; 7.20am & 4pm, Sun.*

When ordered by the government in Portugal to build a church worthy of their mighty empire, Francis Coutinho (viceroy, 1561–4) envisaged a magnificent cathedral that would be the largest in Asia. The result is the Renaissance-style Sé Cathedral, designed in the 16th century by Julio Simao and Ambrosio Argueiro, and built over 80 years. Its 30-m (98-ft) high Tuscan-style façade was flanked by two square bell towers, only one of which survives. In it hangs the Golden Bell, known for its melodic tones, which rang out during the dreaded *auto da fé* trials, held in the cathedral's front square.

The interior, with intricate Corinthian detailing, has a 76-m (249-ft) long central nave. As many as 15 altars grace the interior, but the *pièce de résistance* is the gilded high altar, dedicated to St Catherine of Alexandria, with panel paintings depicting scenes from her life. Two of the eight chapels, the Blessed Sacrament and the Cross of Miracles, have delicate filigree work on their screens. The font, used by St Francis Xavier to baptize converts, is near the entrance. The sacred relics of his body, kept in the Basilica de Bom Jesus *(see pp498–9)*, are brought to the cathedral during the expositions held every ten years.



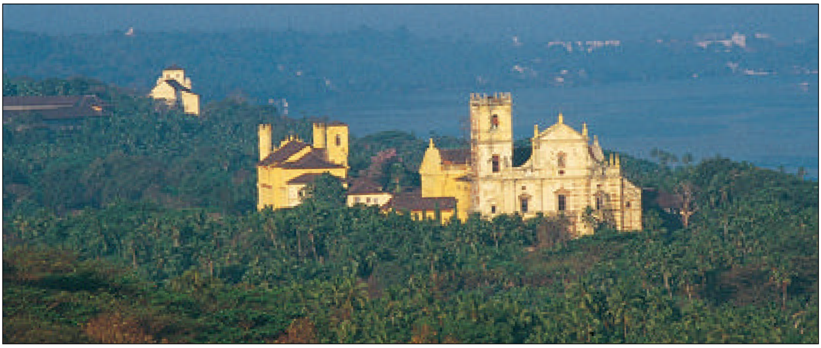
Rows of pillars on either side of the central nave, Sé Cathedral

Archaeological Museum

Convent of St Francis of Assisi.

Tel *(0832) 228 5333.* ○ *Sat–Thu.*

Once Goa's largest monastery, the Convent of St Francis of Assisi (built in 1517) now houses the Archaeological Museum, established in 1964. A huge bronze statue of Alfonso de Albuquerque, moved from Panaji, dominates the entrance hall. Among the objects of interest are a finely carved image of Vishnu and a Surya statue, dating to the Kadamba period (11th–12th centuries), and stone inscriptions in Marathi and Persian,



From right to left, Sé Cathedral, Church of St Francis of Assisi and Church of Our Lady of the Rosary in Old Goa

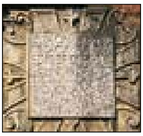
relics of earlier ruling dynasties. Other exhibits include Hindu *sati* stones, a model of *São Gabriel* (the ship in which Vasco da Gama sailed to India in 1498), and a bronze statue of St Catherine in the courtyard. The Portrait Gallery on the first floor has 60 paintings of Goa's viceroys and governors.

Church of St Francis of Assisi

W of Sé Cathedral. ○ *daily.*

Built by the Franciscan friars in 1521, and rebuilt in 1661, this church has a beautifully carved doorway (taken from the original building). This is a rare example of the Portuguese Manueline style, which uses many nautical motifs, and was developed during the reign of King Dom Manuel (r.1469–1521). A pair of navigator's globes and a Greek cross (the emblem of all Portuguese ships) embellish the door. The superb Baroque interior has floral frescoes on the walls and ceiling, and the floor is paved with the sculpted tombstones of Portuguese nobility. The gilded altar has figures of St Francis and Christ. Other noteworthy features are the pulpit, which is carved in floral designs and the painted panels in the chancel, which depict various scenes from the saint's life.

Façade with two octagonal towers, Church of St Francis of Assisi



Detail of memorial, St Augustine's ruins

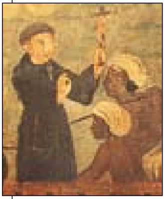
Church and Monastery of St Augustine

Holy Hill.

Once the largest church in India, with a grand five-storeyed façade, St Augustine's now lies in ruins. Erected by the Augustinian order in 1512, the Gothic-style church was abandoned in 1835, and its roof caved in seven years later. Excavations begun in 1989 revealed eight chapels, four altars, wall sculptures and more than 100 splendid granite tombstones. According to contemporary descriptions, the church also had grand staircases and galleries, and a library that rivalled the one at Oxford (England), in the 17th century. Today, all that remains of St Augustine's is its soaring bell tower *(see p496).*

THE GOA INQUISITION

At the request of Francis Xavier *(see p498)*, a tribunal of Jesuits arrived in 1560 and took over Adil Shah's secondary palace (of which few traces now remain), to the south of Sé Cathedral. Their mission was to curb the libertine ways of the Portuguese settlers and convert "infidels". During the Inquisition in 1567, all Hindu ceremonies were banned, temples were destroyed and Hindus forcibly converted. Those who refused were locked away in the dungeons of the "Palace of the Inquisition" (as Adil Shah's palace was known) to await the *auto da fé* (acts of faith) trial. The condemned were burnt alive in front of a congregation of dignitaries. Over the next 200 years, 16,000 trials were held and thousands killed, and it was not until 1812 that the Inquisition was finally dissolved.



Mural of a proselytizing priest

Church of Our Lady of the Rosary

Holy Hill. ○ *daily.*

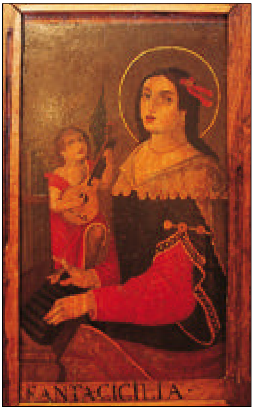
With its castle-like turrets and simple altar painted with baskets of flowers, this is one of Goa's earliest Manueline-style churches. The tomb of Dona Catarina, wife of Garcia de Sá (viceroy from 1548-9) and the first Portuguese woman to migrate to Goa, also lies here.

Further Afield

A few buildings of interest lie in Old Goa's southeastern corner. Marking the end of the Rua Direita, Old Goa's main street, is a desolate basalt pillar on a raised platform, the remains of the terrible **Pillory**. Criminals and heretics were strung up here as punishment, in the centre of the city square. Close by, on the road to Ponda, lies the **College of St Paul**. Founded by the Jesuits in 1541, it had 3,000 students, making it the largest Jesuit school in Asia. It also housed Asia's first printing press. St Francis Xavier stayed and preached here; the chapel further up the road was also used by him, and was later dedicated to his memory.

The Church of Our Lady of the Mount, built in 1510, sits on top of a hill and is reached by a lane that leads off the Cumbarjua Road. Built by Alfonso de Albuquerque after his victory over Yusuf Adil Shah, the church has recently been restored. The views over Old Goa's towers and turrets are magnificent.

Altar in the Church of Our Lady of the Rosary, on Holy Hill



17th-century painting of St Cecilia, patroness of church choirs, Pilar

Pilar ⓫

North Goa district (Tiswadi taluka). 12 km (7 miles) SE of Panaji. 🚌

Set on a hilltop, **Pilar Seminary** was originally built by the Capuchins (a Franciscan order) in 1613, on the site of an old Hindu temple. Abandoned in 1835, when all religious orders were disbanded, it was reopened by the Carmelites in 1858. In 1890, the Society of Pilar set up a mission college here, and classes are still held in the old seminary building.

The adjoining **Church of Our Lady of Pilar** has an elaborately carved stone doorway with a figure of St Francis of Assisi above it. Inside is a statue of Our Lady of Pilar, brought here from Spain. The tomb of Agnelo D'Souza (seminary director, 1918–27) lies adjacent to the church. The **New Seminary**, built in 1946, stands close by. Its museum displays fragments from the original temple, Christian art, Portuguese coins and a stone lion, the symbol of the Kadamba dynasty.

🏛 **Museum**
Tel *(0832) 221 8521.* ○ *daily.*

Environs

Goa Velha, 2 km (1.3 miles) southwest of Pilar, marks the site of Govapuri, the port-capital of the Kadamba rulers between the 11th and 13th centuries, of which few traces now remain.

Ponda ⓬

South Goa district (Ponda taluka). 28 km (17 miles) SE of Panaji. 👥 *17,700.* 🚌 🎪 *Urs of Shah Abdullah (Feb).*

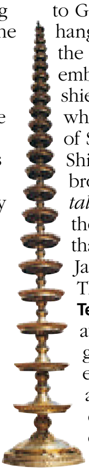
The town of Ponda is a busy commercial centre, and its main sight is the **Safa Shahouri Mosque**, 2 km (1.3 miles) to the west. Built by Ibrahim Adil Shah (a successor of Yusuf Adil Shah) in 1560, it is a rectangular structure, with window arches, topped by a slanting tiled roof. A ritual tank to the south has the same designs as those on the *mihrabs* (arched niches).

Ponda also lends its name to the *taluka* (sub-district) of the same name, which is renowned for its numerous Hindu temples, tucked away in thick forests. As the Portuguese expanded their territory in central Goa, they destroyed over 550 temples. Hindu priests fled with their religious artifacts to regions that lay outside Portuguese control, especially the area around Ponda town, where they built new temples in the 17th and 18th centuries.

More than half of Goa's population is Hindu, and Goan temples, unlike those elsewhere in India, are a fascinating blend of European Baroque, Muslim and Hindu architectural styles. Their basic plan remains Hindu, but often Muslim domes replace the usual *shikharas* (spires) over the main sanctum, and the prayer halls are decorated with ornate European chandeliers.

The **Shantadurga Temple**, 3 km (2 miles) southwest of Ponda at Quela, is Goa's most popular shrine. Built by Shahu, the grandson of the Maratha chief Shivaji *(see p471)*, the russet and cream coloured temple has an unusual pagoda-style roof, dominated by a five-storeyed octagonal lamp tower, unique to Goa. Grand chandeliers hang from the gilded roof in the huge central hall, and embossed silver screens shield the main sanctuary, which holds the silver deity of Shantadurga (a form of Shiva's consort Parvati), brought from Mormugao *taluka*. Also of interest are the huge *rathas* (chariots) that are used during the Jatra in January *(see p493)*.

The **Shri Ramnath Temple**, a short walk away, is noted for the grand silver screen embossed with animal and floral motifs, in front of its sanctum. Its linga, originally from Loutolim, is worshipped by devotees of both Shiva and Vishnu.



Brass lamp tower, Shri Mahalsa Temple

The **Shri Nagueshi Temple**, 4 km (2.5 miles) west of Ponda at Bandora, dates to 1780, though a temple may have stood here earlier. Built for the worship of Nagesh (Shiva as Lord of the Serpents), it is one of the oldest temples in this region. Its entrance hall

The large 18th-century water tank at the Shri Mangesh Temple

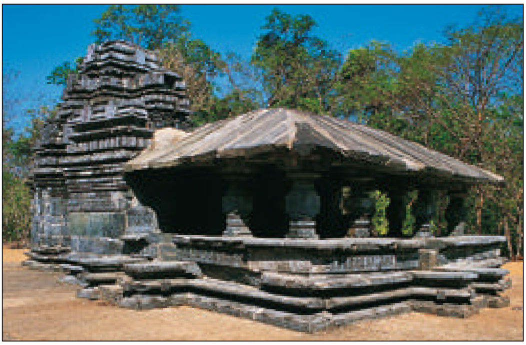
For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp709–11 and pp737–8

has carved wooden friezes depicting scenes from the epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata (see pp26–7).*

The 18th-century **Shri Lakshmi Narasimha Temple** is situated in Velinga village, 5 km (3 miles) northwest of Ponda. Its majestic image of Narasimha, Vishnu's man-lion incarnation *(see p679)*, was brought here from Mormugao in the 1560s. Surrounded by forest, it is one of Goa's most attractive temples, with a sacred tank and an elaborate gateway. A tower standing close by houses the temple's musicians during the annual Jatra festival, held here in May.

Dedicated to Vishnu, the **Shri Mahalsa Temple** is 7 km (4 miles) northwest of Ponda, in Mardol village. The main deity (either a female form of Vishnu or his consort Lakshmi) was taken from Verna. The temple's distinguishing feature is an exceptionally tall brass pillar, 21 tiers in all, rising from a figure of Kurma (Vishnu's incarnation as a turtle), with Garuda (his vehicle) perched on top. The pillar symbolizes Mount Kailasa which, according to Hindu mythology, was placed on Kurma's back and was used to churn the primordial ocean. The original shrine is a wooden structure with a sloping roof, and the entrance porches have carvings of musicians and warriors. Its main hall has intricately carved pillars, while the central part of the ceiling is raised, with painted images of gods set in niches.

A procession during the Shigmo Jatra, at the Shri Mahalsa Temple



The Kadamba-period Tambdi Surla Temple, set on the banks of a stream

A short distance to the northwest, at Priol, lies Goa's wealthiest temple, the 18th-century **Shri Mangesh Temple**, dedicated to Shiva. The courtyard has a sacred *tulsi* (basil) plant growing in a bright green urn, a characteristic Goan feature. There is a large sacred tank and a seven-storeyed lamp tower. Dance-dramas are performed here during the Jatra festivities in April and May. A vividly painted elephant on wheels stands at the entrance to the white and yellow temple. Inside, 19th-century Belgian chandeliers hang from the ceiling, while the main sanctum has a linga transferred from Mormugao. The childhood home of Lata Mangeshkar (b.1929), India's most famous singer of film songs, was near the temple.

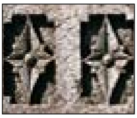
About 4 km (2.5 miles) northeast of Ponda town, near the village of Khandepar, is a cluster of **Hindu Rock-cut Caves** from the 10th–13th centuries, with carved lotus decorations on the ceiling, simple door frames and niches for oil lamps.

A few spice gardens that grow aromatic spices such as cardamom, nutmeg and cinnamon, make interesting day trips from Ponda. The Pascoal Plantation, 8 km (5 miles) east, and the Savoi Spice Garden at Savoi Verem, 12 km (7 miles) north, are easy to reach.

Tambdi Surla ⑬

South Goa district (Sanguem taluka). 73 km (45 miles) E of Panaji. *Taxis from Panaji or Ponda are the best option.*

Hidden away in the forests of Tambdi Surla, stands the oldest existing Hindu temple in Goa, dating from the Kadamba period (between the 11th and 13th centuries). Built in black basalt and dedicated to Shri Mahadeva (Shiva), the temple probably survived because of its remote location. The symmetrical structure is made of stone slabs fitted neatly into each other, without using mortar. Set on a low plinth, the entrance hall has ten pillars, and the *shikhara* (spire) above the sanctum has a miniature relief and fine carvings of Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva and his consort, Parvati.



Detail, Tamdi Surla Temple

Environs

The **Bhagwan Mahaveer Sanctuary**, 20 km (12 miles) southeast of Tamdi Surla, covers an area of 240 sq km (93 sq miles) and is home to leopards, deer and the Indian bison. The 600-m (1,969-ft) high **Dudhsagar Waterfalls** on the Goa-Karnataka border are its main attraction. The small **Bondla Sanctuary**, 30 km (19 miles) east of Tambdi Surla, is known for its variety of birds.

Bhagwan Mahaveer Sanctuary
○ *daily.*

Bondla Sanctuary
○ *Sep-Jun: Fri-Wed.*

Altar, Church of St Ignatius Loyola, Rachol

Rachol ⑭

South Goa district (Salcete taluka). 52 km (32 miles) SE of Panaji. 🚌

The small hamlet of Rachol occupies the site of an old fortress built by the Bijapur sultans *(see p542)*, which was ceded to the Portuguese in 1520. A laterite archway and a dry moat are the only remnants of the bastion – once fortified with 100 cannons – that used to guard the southern borders of the Portuguese territories. The pretty **Church of Nossa Senhora das Neves** (Our Lady of the Snows), in the village, was built in 1576.

Today, **Rachol Seminary**, built in 1606, is probably the most important of Goa's seminaries. First established in Margao in 1574, and known as the College of All Saints, the earlier seminary included a hospital, a school for the poor and a printing press. It was relocated here after the Margao institution was destroyed in a Muslim raid in 1579. For generations, this was Goa's most prestigious educational institution, both for secular and religious studies, offering a seven-year course in theology and philosophy, to prepare young seminarians for the priesthood.

Spectacularly located on the summit of a hill, the building has a grand fort-like façade, flanked by imposing watchtowers. The seminary's vast entrance hall is covered with impressive murals and opens on to a central courtyard, surrounded by cloistered rooms made of solid teak, each one with an adjoining wood-panelled study. The grand staircase is adorned with Hindu sculptures, excavated from the ancient Hindu temple on the site of which the seminary was constructed. This leads to the first floor and the library, which has a rare collection of Latin and Portuguese books, and portraits of Goa's archbishops.

Attached to the seminary is the **Church of St Ignatius Loyola**, dedicated to the eponymous saint. It has an ornately carved and gilded altar with a painting of St Constantine, the first Roman emperor to convert to Christianity. According to legend, a few bone fragments and a vial of his blood were brought to Rachol in 1782, and are supposedly enshrined near the entrance. The choir stall has delicate murals of the founding saints of various religious orders. On the first floor balcony is a beautiful 16th-century pipe-organ from Lisbon.

Silver reliquary, museum collection

Until mid-2001, Rachol Seminary also housed the renowned Museum of Christian Art, established in 1991 by the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) and the Gulbenkian Foundation of Portugal. The entire collection is currently being shifted to the Convent of St Monica in Old Goa *(see p496)*, and will be set up in the Chapel of the Weeping Cross, adjacent to the convent. Its impressive collection of 17th- and 18th-century religious objects includes silver and ivory ornaments, ornate clerical robes, processional crosses and holy water sprinklers. Particularly charming is a portable altar for travelling missionaries, complete with candle stands and a mass kit.

Margao ⑮

South Goa district (Salcete taluka). 33 km (21 miles) S of Panaji. 👥 *78,500.* 🚆 🚌 ℹ *Margao Residency, (0832) 271 5528.* 🎉 *Feast of the Holy Spirit (Dec).*

Margao (Madgaon), Goa's second most important city after Panaji, is the administrative and commercial capital of the South Goa district. This bustling town also serves as the area's main trading centre for local fish and farm produce.

The town square, **Praça Jorge Barreto**, has the large, colonial Municipal Building, which houses the library on its southern side, and a popular café called Longinhos

A view of the hilltop Seminary and Church at Rachol nearby. Just behind the Municipal Building, to the south, are Margao's lively bazaars, selling the day's catch of fish and fresh fruit and vegetables. The **Covered Market**, close by, sells just about everything, including piles of soap flakes, pulses, dried fish, pickles, spicy pork sausages, tamarind, flower garlands, jaggery and crockery. A row of shops to the north sells locally brewed wines, and the lane just outside the market has a number of cloth merchants.

The red and white Municipal Building, Praça Jorge Barreto, Margao

Monumental cross in Largo de Igreja

Abbé de Faria Street, winding north from the town square, is lined with some well-preserved colonial mansions, and leads to Margao's old Latin Quarter. Its central square, **Largo de Igreja**, is also surrounded by colourful 18th- and 19th-century town houses, with tiled roofs, wrought-iron balconies and balustrades. In the centre of the square is a monumental, 16th-century cross, overlooked by the towering Baroque **Church of the Holy Spirit**. Built in 1565 on the site of a ravaged Hindu temple, the church and the adjoining Jesuit College of All Saints were ransacked numerous times by Muslim raiders. While the seminary was moved to Rachol, the church was rebuilt in 1675. Its whitewashed façade is flanked by two towers topped by domes and embellished with lanterns, though its side walls have been left unusually bare of lime-plaster. The grand interior has a stucco ceiling, a gilded pulpit decorated with carvings of the apostles, a Rococo altar, and elegant Baroque altarpieces in the transepts. Just behind the church, Agostinho Lorenço Street leads east to the imposing mansion called **Sat Burnzam Gor**, or "Seven Gables" *(see p506)*, named after the original seven gables or pyramidal crests on its roof. It is the only surviving example of a house with pyramidal roofs in Goa. Built in 1790 by Ignacio da Silva from his earnings as the viceroy's secretary, the huge, impressive salons are filled with richly carved rosewood furniture and priceless porcelain, and its private chapel was the first that was permitted in Goa. From the intersection lying east of the church, a road winds up to **Monte Hill**. Although one cannot enter the tiny chapel at the top, the views across Margao's rooftops of the entire southern coast are spectacular.

Fresh prawns, sardines, mackerel and salmon, Margao bazaar

Sat Burnzam Gor

Only by prior appointment; contact Mrs de Silva.

Environs

The pretty villages around Margao have a number of colonial country mansions, dating to the prosperous period from the 18th to the 19th centuries, when local landlords began to profit from Portugal's control over the maritime trade routes from Africa to Malacca (in Malaysia). Many of these homes were also owned by Goans, who held high posts in the Portuguese government and were granted land in exchange for their services.

Loutolim, 10 km (6 miles) to the northeast, was once an important Portuguese administrative centre, and has a cluster of stately homes, all situated fairly close to the main church square. The Goa Tourism office, and the Houses of Goa museum, (0832) 241 0711, located at Salvador do Mundo, can organize visits to these buildings. **Chandor**, 13 km (8 miles) east of Margao, has the palatial Braganza house, Goa's largest private dwelling *(see pp508–9)*. **Chinchinim**, 10 km (6 miles) south of Margao, and **Benaulim**, 6 km (4 miles) southwest of Margao, also have fine mansions, with typical Goan *balcaos* (porches) and terracotta-tiled sloping roofs.

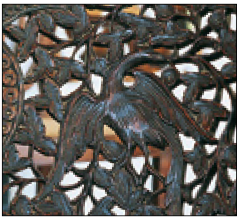
Goa's Colonial Mansions

Chinese vase

Goa's countryside is dotted with grand colonial mansions, built by the wealthy land-owning Goan gentry, who prospered in the 18th and 19th centuries. The homes of these local aristocrats were built in the traditional style of the region, with central courtyards, deep porches and window shutters made of oyster-shell. The furniture and interior decor, however, were largely European. Today, the Belgian chandeliers, Venetian cut-glass and gilded mirrors, Baroque-style rosewood furniture and Chinese porcelain, displayed inside, provide a fascinating picture of the tastes and lifestyles of a vanished era.

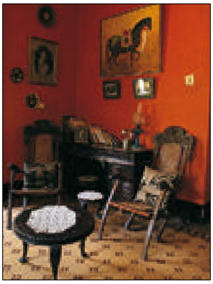
Oyster-shell window shutters *line the façade of Sat Burnzam Gor ("Seven Gables") in Margao. A unique feature of 16th- and 17th-century Goan architecture, oyster shells were used in place of glass panes and effectively kept out the heat and glare.*

A typical pyramidal balcao, *or porch, graces the entrance of the Figueredo House in Loutolim. Chairs were often placed under the* balcao, *as it was customary to socialize at the front door.*



This antique rosewood carving *from Goa's grandest mansion, Braganza House in Chandor* (see pp508–9), *is a typical example of Indo-Portuguese Baroque.*

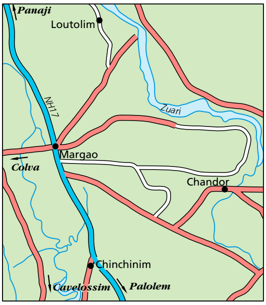
European-style salons, *such as the regal ballroom in the Dr Alvaro Loyola Furtado Mansion in Chinchinim, built in 1833, have crystal chandeliers and elegant furniture.*



Carved antique furniture at the Casa dos Mirandos

WHERE TO SEE GOAN HOUSES

Loutolim has four houses of interest – Salvador da Costa House, Roque Caetan Miranda House, Figueredo House and Casa dos Mirandos, which is the finest. **Margao** has the Sat Burnzam Gor, **Chinchinim** has the Loyola Furtado Mansion, and **Chandor** has the Braganza House. For more details see page 505.

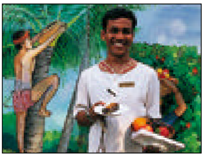


Colva ⑰

South Goa district (Salcete taluka). 6 km (4 miles) W of Margao. 🚌 ℹ *GTDC Tourist Cottage, (0832) 278 8047.* 🎉 *Fama de Menino Jesus (Oct).*

Colva's proximity to Margao makes it an ideal summer retreat for Margao's residents. It is one of South Goa's oldest and most developed beach resorts, and its 25-km (16-mile) long sandy beach, from the Mormugao peninsula in the north to Mobor in the south, is the longest uninterrupted stretch in the state.

Today, Colva draws vast numbers of visitors, who spend the day enjoying the lively atmosphere of its many beach shacks, set high on stilts and backed by shady palms. These serve delicious grilled lobster and other seafood specialities. Numerous top-end and mid-range hotels stand on the main beach road, while the southern extremities have more pristine stretches. Fisherfolk haul in their catch on the beach front, which also plays host to full-moon rave parties.


A cheerful waiter, Mobor

Standing a short distance from the sea, Colva's **Church of Our Lady of Mercy**, built in 1630, has an attractive Baroque interior and houses the famous statue of Menino (baby) Jesus, holding an orb and a flag, revered for its miraculous healing powers.

Environs

Majorda, 7 km (4 miles) north of Colva, has a wide beach dotted with luxury hotels. **Bogmalo Beach**, 20 km (12 miles) northwest of Colva, is a popular venue for wind-surfing.

Tourism has spilled over from Colva to the quiet fishing village of **Benaulim**, 2 km (1.3 miles) south, whose roads are lined with small guesthouses, restaurants and bars. **Varca Beach**, 5 km (3 miles) further south, has many plush hotels, as well as a parish church with an imposing façade.

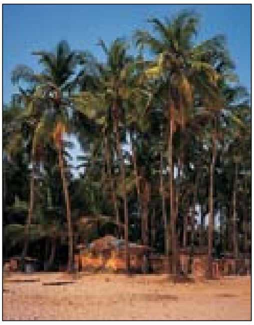
Cavelossim ⑱

South Goa district (Salcete taluka). 15 km (9 miles) S of Margao. 🚌

A favourite with Indian celebrities, Cavelossim has an enchanting 2-km (1.3-mile) stretch of sand. It also has a golf course, luxury resorts and excellent seafood restaurants, such as the Seaways Bar. The ornate **Church of the Holy Cross**, is situated in a pretty square.

Environs

Mobor, 5 km (3 miles) south of Colva, is an idyllic spot, with its backdrop of hills and the pretty fishing village of **Betul** nestling near the Sal river. The Leela Beach Resort is located here. **Cabo da Rama** ("Cape Rama"), the promontory just south of Betul, is named after Rama, hero of the *Ramayana*, who supposedly hid here during his 14-year exile *(see p27)*. It has the ruins of a Hindu fortress that fell to the Portuguese in 1763.


A thatch-roofed beach shack, Palolem Beach

Palolem ⑲

South Goa district (Salcete taluka). 37 km (23 miles) S of Margao. 🚌

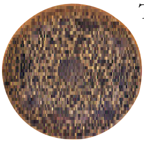
Famous for its spectacular sunsets, this bay is enclosed by a rocky outcrop at one end, and Canacona Island, a good camping site, at the other. Palolem's remote location, away from the crowded beaches of central Goa, makes it an ideal for a quiet holiday. A special attraction are the boat rides offered by fishermen, who take visitors out to sea for dolphin-watching trips.

Environs

Southern Goa is for the most part isolated and unspoilt by tourism. **Agonda**, 7 km (4 miles) north of Palolem, is even quieter than its neighbour. **Galgibaga**, 8 km (5 miles) south of Palolem, has a beautiful stretch of virgin sand, shaded by eucalyptus trees rather than palms. The remote **Cotigao Wildlife Sanctuary**, 18 km (11 miles) west of Palolem, is worth visiting for its tranquil beauty.

Visitors cycling on the sands at Colva, Goa's longest beach

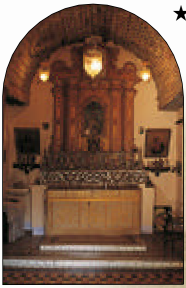
Braganza House ⑯



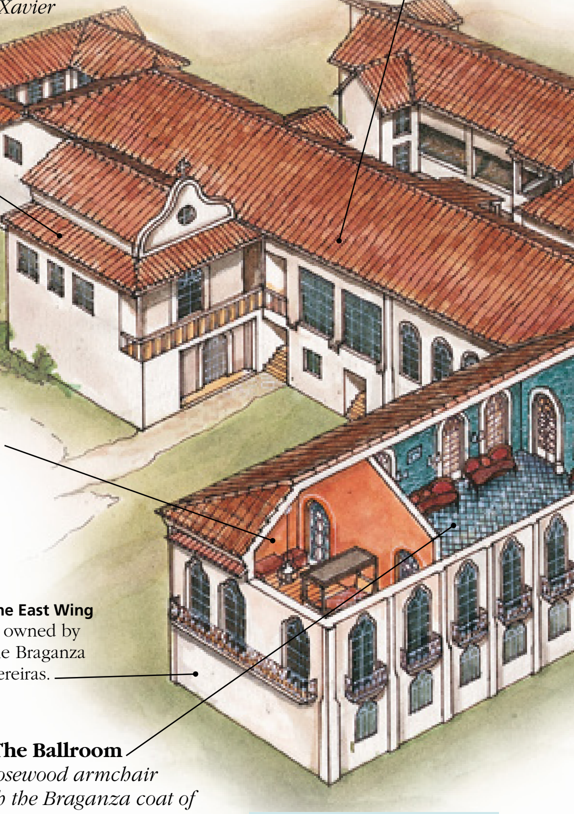
Chinese blue porcelain dish

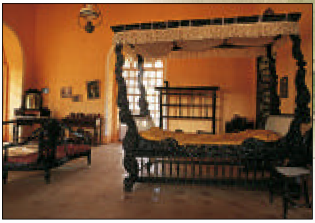
The awesome scale of Braganza House, and the magnificence of its interior, make it Goa's grandest colonial mansion. This 17th-century building is still occupied by two branches of the Braganza family. The descendants of Antonio Elzario Sant'Anna Pereira occupy the east wing, while Francisco Xavier de Menezes Braganza's descendants live in the west wing. Both men received royal titles and a coat of arms from the king of Portugal in the late 19th century. The top floors of their private apartments have the splendid ballroom, library and chapel, and fine collections of 18th-century furniture and Chinese porcelain.

Dining Hall
A long table fills the first floor dining hall of this sprawling mansion.



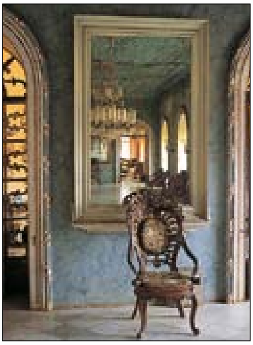
★ The Chapel
The Baroque-style chapel has a diamond-encrusted fingernail of St Francis Xavier on its altar.





Guest Bedroom
A large rosewood four-poster bed dominates the bedroom. At its foot is a rosewood two-seater.

The East Wing is owned by the Braganza Pereiras.



★ The Ballroom
A rosewood armchair with the Braganza coat of arms, and a gilded mirror are in the mansion's grandest room. The walls as well as the floors are of marble, and chandeliers hang from its floral-patterned zinc ceiling.

STAR FEATURES

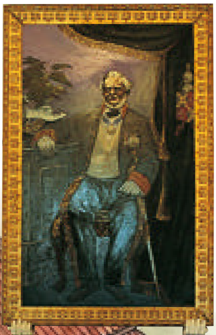
- ★ The Chapel
- ★ The Ballroom
- ★ The Hallway

Menezes Braganza Salon
A collection of exquisite Chinese porcelain is displayed in one of the salons, where a large vase takes pride of place.

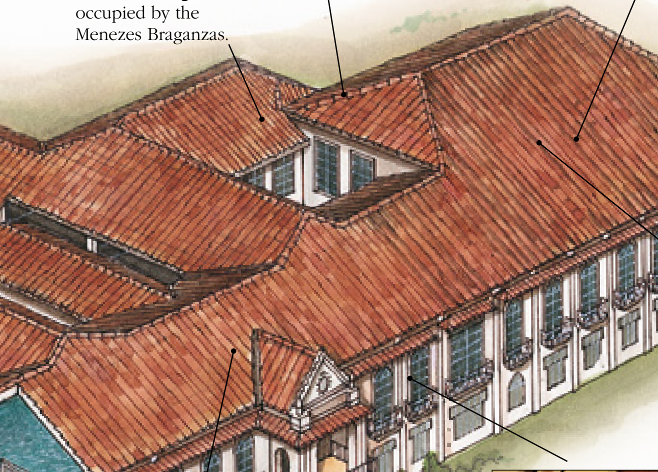
VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Church Square, Chandor (Salcete taluka). 20 km (12 miles) E of Margao. **Menezes Braganza Wing** ***Tel*** *(0832) 278 4201;* **Braganza Pereira Wing** ***Tel*** *(0832) 278 4227. Admission to both wings only by prior appointment.* *Donations appreciated.*

Portrait of Francisco Xavier de Menezes Braganza
A portrait of the grandfather of renowned journalist, Luis de Menezes Braganza (see p487), *hangs in the ballroom of the west wing.*



The West Wing is occupied by the Menezes Braganzas.

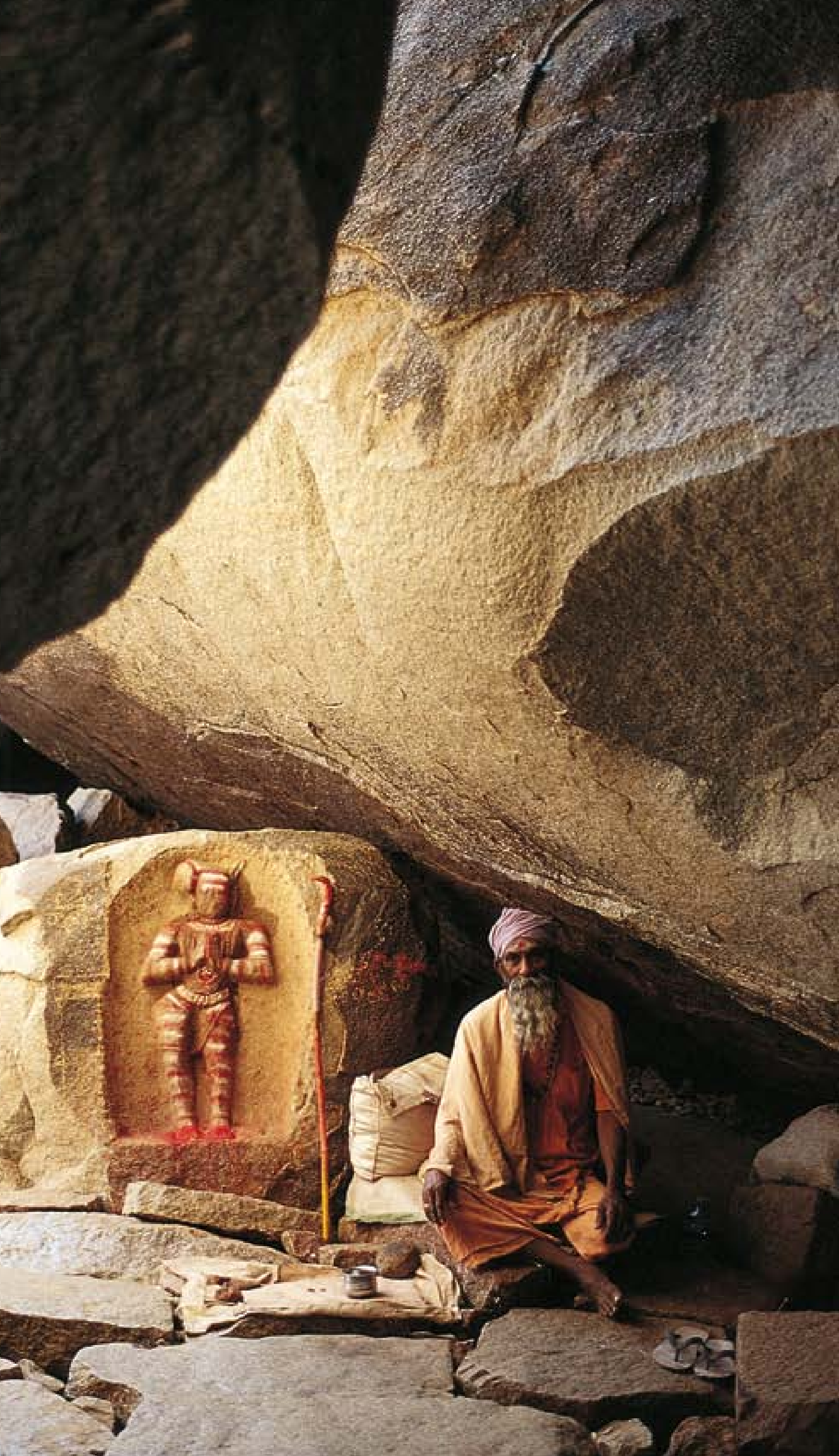


The Library has Goa's finest private collection, with over 5,000 leather-bound books.

Entrance

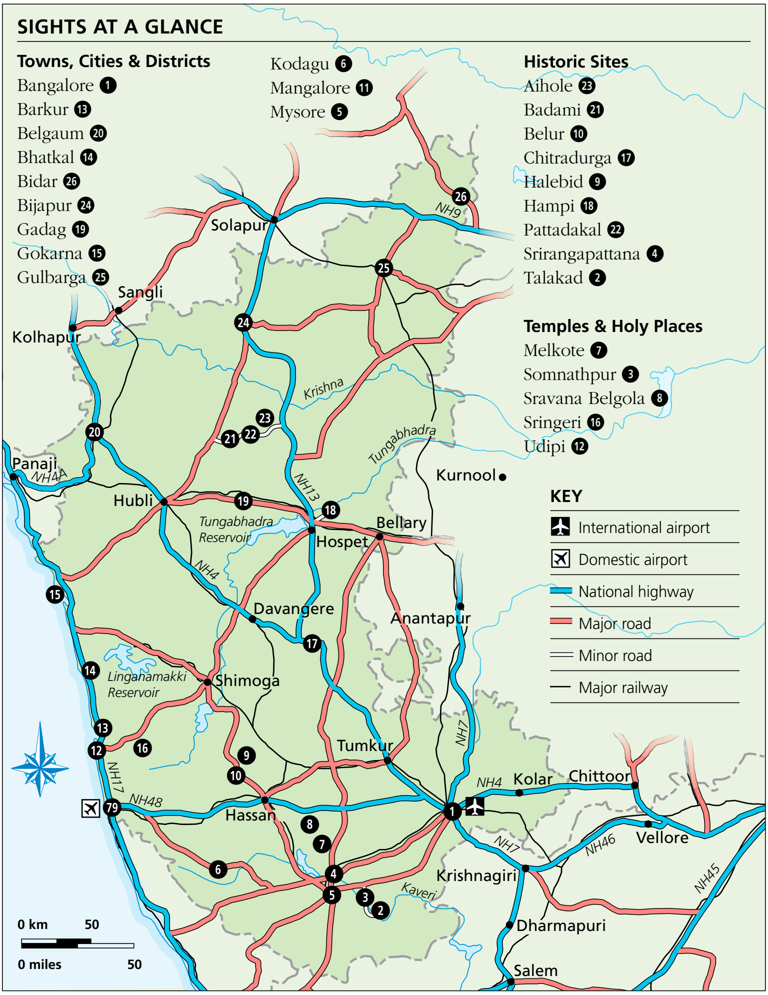
★ The Hallway
A long and elegantly furnished hallway lies just behind the façade of the house. It is lined with 28 bay windows and overlooks a well-maintained garden.

Stairway
The monumental double staircase forms the core of the house, connecting the lower entrance level to the furnished top floors.



KARNATAKA

Extending from the Arabian Sea and the fertile forested ridges of the Western Ghats, with their thriving plantations of coffee, spices and fruit, to the drier, boulder-strewn region of the Deccan Plateau, Karnataka's scenic diversity is striking. Equally varied are its historical monuments. These range from the 6th–8th century Hindu temples at Badami, Pattadakal and Aihole, the earliest to be found in South India, to Tipu Sultan's 18th-century, European-style island fort at Srirangapattana, and the extravagantly turreted, early 20th-century palace in Mysore. Other sights include the superb temples at Halebid and Belur, the colossal Gommateshvara monolith at Sravana Belgola and the magnificent ruins of Hampi, the site of the great citadel of Vijayanagar. In northern Karnataka are the medieval citadels of the Deccan sultans at Bijapur, Gulbarga and Bidar, their walls enclosing mosques, audience halls and royal tombs.



SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

Towns, Cities & Districts	
Bangalore	❶
Barkur	⓭
Belgaum	⓴
Bhatkal	⓮
Bidar	(26)
Bijapur	(24)
Gadag	⓳
Gokarna	⓯
Gulbarga	(25)
Kodagu	❻
Mangalore	⓫
Mysore	❺

Historic Sites	
Aihole	(23)
Badami	(21)
Belur	❿
Chitradurga	⓱
Halebid	❾
Hampi	⓲
Pattadakal	(22)
Srirangapattana	❹
Talakad	❷

Temples & Holy Places	
Melkote	❼
Somnathpur	❸
Sravana Belgola	❽
Sringeri	⓰
Udipi	⓬

KEY
✈ International airport
☒ Domestic airport
National highway
Major road
Minor road
Major railway
Solapur
Sangli
Kolhapur
Panaji
NH4A
NH9
NH13
Krishna
Tungabhadra
Kurnool
Hubli
Tungabhadra Reservoir
Bellary
Hospet
NH4
Davangere
Anantapur
Linganamakki Reservoir
Shimoga
NH17
NH48
NH7
Tumkur
Hassan
NH4
Kolar
Chittoor
NH46
Vellore
NH45
Krishnagiri
Kaveri
Dharmapuri
Salem
0 km 50
0 miles 50

◁ **A mendicant at a shrine beside the Tungabhadra river, Hampi**

Bangalore ❶

Stone carving, Museum

Often described as Asia's Silicon Valley because of its thriving information technology industry, Bangalore is India's fifth-largest and fastest-growing city. Until its high-tech boom began in the late 1980s, it was known as the Garden City, with greenery flourishing in its pleasant, temperate climate. Today, with a growing population of young professionals, it has acquired a vibrant, cosmopolitan air. Bangalore was founded in the 16th century by a local chieftain, Kempe Gowda, but derives its name from the Kannada word *benda kaluru*, or "boiled beans", which an old woman gave a 10th-century Hoysala king when he turned up hungry at her doorstep.

Vidhana Soudha

Dr Ambedkar Rd. ● *to the public.*

Built of granite and porphyry, this imposing building houses the Secretariat and the State Legislature of Karnataka. Constructed in 1956 after the transfer of power from the ruling Wodeyar dynasty to the central government, it was designed by Kengal Hanumanthaiah, the then chief minister, who intended it to "reflect the power and dignity of the people". It is capped by a 20-m (66-ft) dome, which is surmounted by the four-headed Ashokan lion, symbol of the Indian state. With Rajasthani *jharokhas*, Indo-Saracenic pillars and other decorative elements, the Vidhana Soudha exemplifies the Neo-Dravidian style of post-Independence Bangalore. The woodwork inside is noteworthy, especially the sandalwood door to the Cabinet Room, and the Speaker's Chair made of rosewood from Mysore. The building looks spectacular on Sunday evenings when it is beautifully illuminated.

The magnificent Vidhana Soudha, housing the Karnataka Secretariat

Attara Kacheri

E Vidhana Vidhi.

○ *Mon–Fri.*

This graceful, two-storeyed building with Corinthian columns, was completed in 1864 and housed the Public Offices from 1868 until 1956. These were later moved to the Vidhana Soudha, and this building became the High Court. On the ceiling of its Central Hall is a portrait of Sir Mark Cubbon, commissioner of Mysore from 1834 to 1861. Behind the building is an equestrian statue of him by Baron Marochetti.

Cubbon Park

Cantonment. ○ *daily.* 🍴

Laid out in 1864 by Richard Sankey, the chief engineer of Mysore, and named in honour of the commissioner, Cubbon Park extends over 135 ha (334 acres). Its partly formal landscaping imaginatively integrates natural rock outcroppings with groves of trees and giant bamboos.

The park is liberally dotted with statues, such as that of the 19th-century ruler Chamarajendra Wodeyar (1868–94), overlooking the pond near an octagonal, cast-iron bandstand. There are also marble statues of Queen Victoria and Edward VII. In the middle of the park, a red-painted, Neo-Classical building known as the **Sheshadri Iyer Memorial**, houses a public library.

Chamarajendra Wodeyar

Government Museum

Kasturba Gandhi Rd.

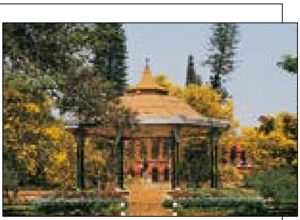
Tel *(080) 2360 5033.*

○ *Tue–Sun.* 📷

Venkatappa Art Gallery ***Tel*** *(080) 2286 4483.* ○ *Tue–Sun.* 📷

Established in 1866, this is one of the oldest museums in the country. Housed in a

GARDEN CITY

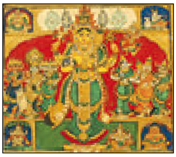


A corner of Cubbon Park

The Cantonment in Bangalore was established in 1809, to house British troops quartered here during the 19th century. With its orderly streets, houses with characteristic "monkey top" eaves, and its lawns, trees, flowers and shrubbery, Bangalore was eventually christened the "Garden City of India". Two large parks, Cubbon Park and Lalbagh, along with numerous smaller ones such as the Kensington Gardens, act as the lungs of this verdant city. These gardens provide a welcome retreat from Bangalore's crowded streets and give a refreshing sense of space. The city is particularly charming in January and August when dahlias, marigolds and roses bloom in abundance.

red stucco Neo-Classical building with Corinthian columns, it has 18 sections, with a fine collection of jewellery, miniature paintings, sculpture, artifacts from Mohenjodaro, and 5,000-year-old neolithic relics.

The **Venkatappa Art Gallery**, named after an early 20th-century artist patronized by the Wodeyar rulers of Mysore, forms one wing of this museum. It has watercolours and paintings made in the Mysore style. These works still retain a greenish coating, imparted by a finishing rub with jade. The gallery also has a collection of leather puppets made of deer- and goat-skin, and fine sculptures from the Satvahana, Hoysala and Vijayanagar periods.



Mysore painting from Venkatappa Art Gallery

⛪ St Mark's Cathedral

Mahatma Gandhi Rd. ○ *Tue–Sun.*

This simple, Neo-Classical cathedral was completed in 1812 and consecrated by the Bishop of Calcutta in 1816. An elegant, cream-coloured structure, it has an imposing portico in front and an apsidal recess at the rear. A shallow dome marks the internal crossing.

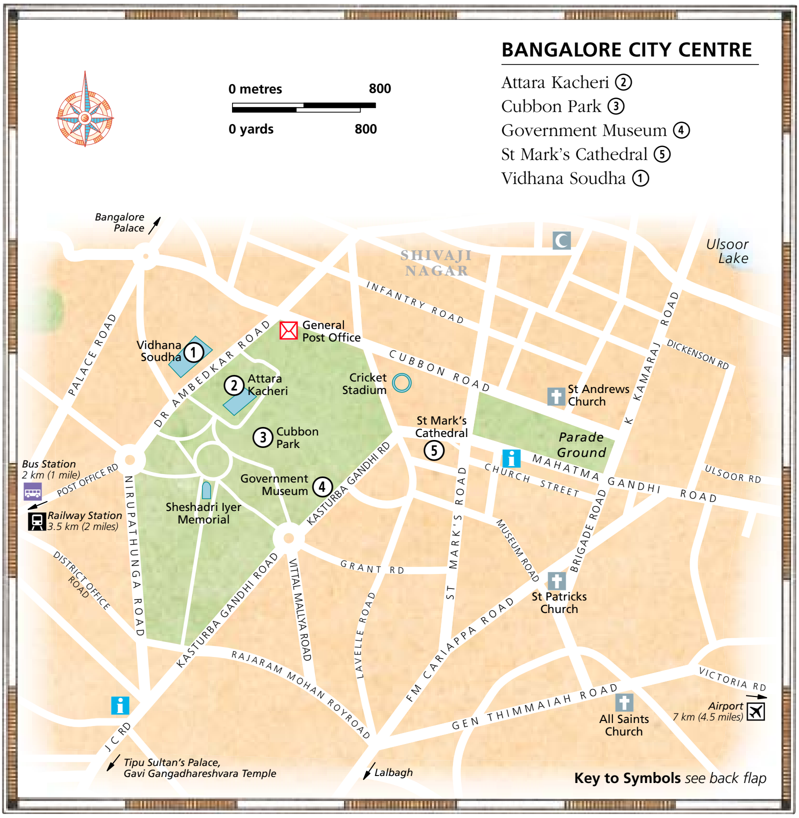
🏛 Bangalore Palace

N of Vidhana Soudha. ***Tel*** *(080) 2336 0818 for permission to visit.*

Built in 1880 at the exorbitant cost of one million rupees, the Bangalore Palace was modelled on Windsor Castle, complete with fortified towers and turreted parapets. It stands amid undulating lawns, partly converted into a formal garden with axial paths. Spread over 13,700 sq m (147,466 sq ft), the palace fell into disrepair after 1949 when it was at the centre of an ownership dispute between the government and the ruling Wodeyars. It has since been restored to the Wodeyars and is now rented out as a popular venue for functions such as weddings and music concerts, and film shoots. No Kannada movie is considered complete if a scene is not shot here.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Bangalore district. 1,033 km (642 miles) S of Mumbai. 👥 *4,292,500.* ✈ *9 km (6 miles) E of city centre, then bus or taxi.* 🚉 🚌 ℹ *Govt of India Tourist Office, 48 Church St, (080) 2558 5417; Karnataka Tourism, Badami House, NRS Square, (080) 2227 5869.* 🎉 *Karaga (Apr), Kadalekaye Parishe (Nov/Dec).*



0 metres 800
0 yards 800
Bangalore Palace
SHIVAJI NAGAR
Ulsoor Lake
INFANTRY ROAD
General Post Office
PALACE ROAD
Vidhana Soudha ①
DR AMBEDKAR ROAD
Attara Kacheri ②
Cricket Stadium
CUBBON ROAD
KAMARAJ ROAD
DICKENSON RD
St Andrews Church
St Mark's Cathedral ⑤
Parade Ground
Cubbon Park ③
MAHATMA GANDHI ROAD
ULSOOR RD
CHURCH STREET
Bus Station 2 km (1 mile)
POST OFFICE RD
Government Museum ④
KASTURBA GANDHI RD
Railway Station 3.5 km (2 miles)
NIRUPATHUNGA ROAD
Sheshadri Iyer Memorial
ST MARK'S ROAD
MUSEUM ROAD
BRIGADE ROAD
DISTRICT OFFICE ROAD
GRANT RD
VITTAL MALLYA ROAD
LAVELLE ROAD
KASTURBA GANDHI ROAD
St Patricks Church
FM CARIAPPA ROAD
RAJARAM MOHAN ROY ROAD
VICTORIA RD
GEN THIMMAIAH ROAD
Airport 7 km (4.5 miles)
All Saints Church
J C RD
Tipu Sultan's Palace, Gavi Gangadhareshvara Temple
Lalbagh

BANGALORE CITY CENTRE

Attara Kacheri ②
Cubbon Park ③
Government Museum ④
St Mark's Cathedral ⑤
Vidhana Soudha ①

Key to Symbols *see back flap*

Exploring Old Bangalore

In spite of rapid development, vestiges of the city's historic past are still found in the streets of Old Bangalore, south of the city centre. In contrast to the relentless modernization of the rest of Bangalore, this area contains monuments from the period of the Gowdas to that of Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan, and bears witness to the city's history from the 16th to the 19th centuries.

Tipu Sultan's Palace

Albert Victor Rd.
Tel *(080) 2670 6836*
○ *Mon–Sat.* ▨

Within the original citadel, a mud-brick fort built by Kempe Gowda in 1537, lies Tipu Sultan's Palace, dating from about 1790. Made mostly out of wood with finely embellished balconies, pillars and arches, this two-storeyed structure, a replica of the Daria Daulat Bagh in Srirangapattana *(see p516)*, served as a summer retreat of Tipu Sultan. He endearingly called it Rashk-e-Jannat, or the "Envy of Heaven". Although now dilapidated, it is still a hauntingly atmospheric place retaining the original elegant teak pillars.

The palace housed the public administrative offices from 1831, until they were shifted to the Attara Kacheri in 1868 *(see p512)*. It now has a museum with artifacts from the Haider Ali–Tipu regime.

Dahlia bloom, Lalbagh

The Venkataramanaswamy Temple, nearby, dates from the early 18th century and was built by the Wodeyar kings.

Lalbagh

Lalbagh Fort Rd.
Tel *(080) 2657 0181*
○ *daily.* ▨ 🍴 ▨ *Flower Show (Jan & Aug).*

Regarded as one of the most richly diverse botanical gardens in South Asia, Lalbagh, in the southern part of the city, was laid out by Haider Ali in 1740. Spread over 97 ha (240 acres) of parkland, many of its tropical and subtropical plants were brought here by Haider Ali's son, Tipu Sultan. Later, John Cameron, the Gardens' Superintendent in the 1870s, imported several more rare species from Kew Gardens in London. Cameron was also responsible for initiating work on Lalbagh's famous Glass House, modelled on London's Crystal Palace and conceived as a venue for horticultural shows. Surrounded by *champaka* trees and pencil cedars, the Glass House has played host to several visiting dignitaries. An Annual Flower Show is still held here.

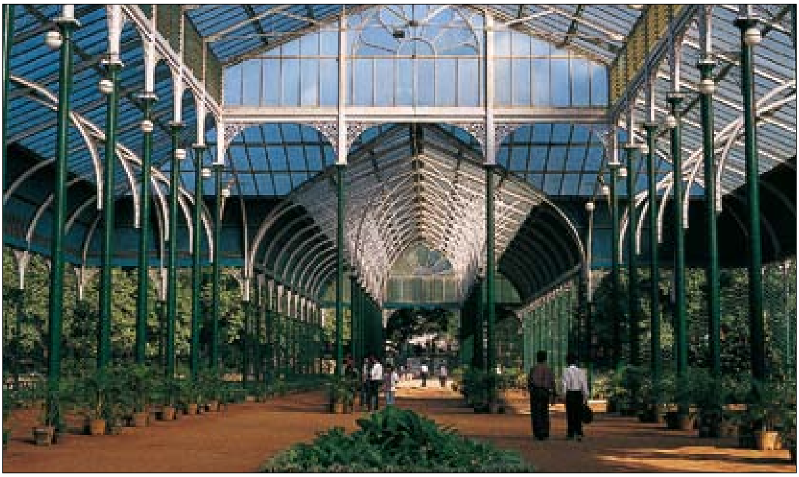
The entrance to the park is marked by an equestrian statue of Chamaraja Wodeyar of Mysore. Another popular attraction is the surreal Floral Clock, surrounded by Snow White and the seven dwarfs; this was a gift from Hindustan Machine Tools, leading Indian manufacturers of watches.

Gavi Gangadhareshvara Temple

W of Lalbagh. ○ *daily.* ▨ *Makar Sankranti (Jan).*

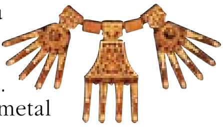
One of Bangalore's oldest temples, the Gavi Gangadhareshvara Temple was built inside a natural cave in Gavipuram by Kempe Gowda in the 16th century. Legend has it that Kempe Gowda built this temple in gratitude after being released from his five-year imprisonment by Rama Raya.

Highlights include granite pillars, two of which support huge discs representing the sun and the moon, while the other two are topped by a Nandi and a trident. Devotees gather here during the Makar Sankranti festival to witness a unique phenomenon – the evening sun's rays passing between Nandi's horns and falling on the linga inside the cave.

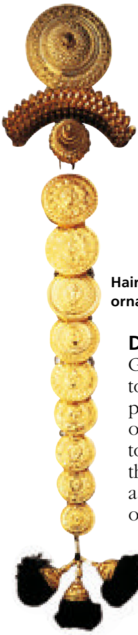

The spacious, 19th-century Glass House at Lalbagh, with its intricate cast-iron frame

The Glitter of Gold

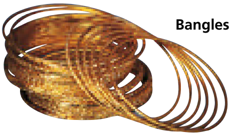
The ancient seers of India referred to gold by many names – synonyms for life, longevity, and beauty. Indians considered this metal auspicious and believed that wearing gold ornaments would ensure a long life. Craftsmen traditionally drew inspiration for their designs and motifs from nature, and also from the splendid temples with their ornately carved façades. The Kolar and Hatti mines in Karnataka were the repositories of the largest deposits of gold in ancient India. Due to the high price of gold, craftsmen mastered the technique of beating a minuscule quantity of gold into thin sheets and then transforming them into exquisite jewellery.



A gold *tali* pendant



Hair ornament

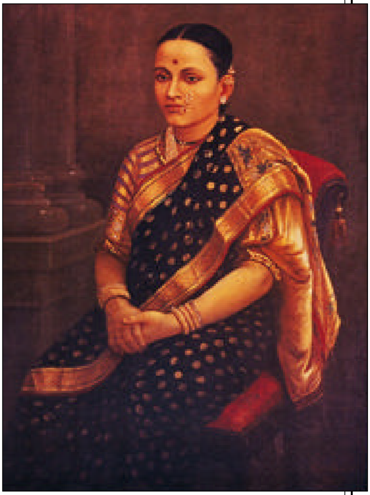


Bangles

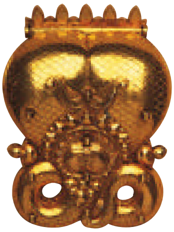
Earrings

DECORATIVE ORNAMENTS

Gold ornaments were designed to be worn on practically every part of the body, from the crown of the head to the tips of the toes, to decorate and protect the wearer. Plants, animals and astral bodies inspired many of the shapes.



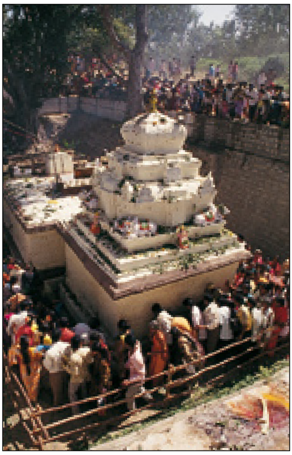
***A Lady*, late 19th-century painting by Raja Ravi Varma showing a woman in her finery**



A large cobra head, *set with rubies, emeralds and diamonds and edged with emerald beads, is tied to a plait to prevent it from unravelling. The snake form, as a symbol of fertility, occurs in many ornaments.*

Temple deities *are often adorned with ritual ornaments. These pieces display some of the forms and techniques used by ancient Indian jewellers, and show the evolution of their craft.*

Pavan Sara, *a necklace made of coins, is a piece of jewellery found all over the country. As an instrument of savings, the coins were redeemed for cash when the need arose.*



Devotees congregating at the Vaidyeshvara Temple, Talakad

Talakad ❷

Mysore district. 50 km (30 miles) SE of Mysore. 🚌 🎉 *Panchalinga Darshana (at intervals of 4–12 years).*

The historic city of Talakad, situated on the north bank of the Kaveri river, now lies partly buried under shifting sand dunes. From the 5th to the 10th centuries it was the capital of the Ganga dynasty *(see p522)*, but only two modest temples survive from that period. The largest edifice at this site is the 12th-century **Vaidyeshvara Temple**, dedicated to Shiva. Nearby is the more modest Kirti Narayana Temple, where the 3-m (10-ft) high image of Vishnu is still worshipped. A festival, the Panchalinga Darshana, is celebrated here at intervals ranging from four to 12 years.

Somnathpur ❸

Mysore district. 36 km (22 miles) E of Mysore. 🚌

One of the finest representations of Hoysala architecture *(see p524)*, the **Keshava Temple** is the highlight of this obscure little village. Built in 1268 by Somnatha, a general of King Narasimha III, its design is attributed to the celebrated sculptor and architect, Janakacharya. The temple is accessed from the east, through a doorway with an open portico, where a slab records Somnatha's generous donations. Unlike the other Hoysala temples at Halebid and Belur *(see p523)*, this is well preserved and has complete towers. The temple has three star-shaped shrines that lead off a pillared hall; both the shrines and the hall stand on a high plinth. The basements of the inner sanctums and hall are profusely carved with animal and floral patterns, while images of deities under foliage canopies occupy the walls above. The interior of the hall is remarkable for its splendid columns and the elaborate ceilings which display lobed motifs, pendant buds and looped bands. The three shrines house fully-modelled, life-size images of Krishna playing the flute (south) and Janardana, a form of Vishnu (north). The Krishna image in the western shrine is a recent replacement of the original.

Insignia engraved on a horse-cart, Srirangapattana

Also in Somnathpur is the ruined granite **Panchalinga Temple**, built in 1268 as a memorial in honour of Somnatha's family.

Keshava Temple
🕒 *daily.*

Srirangapattana ❹

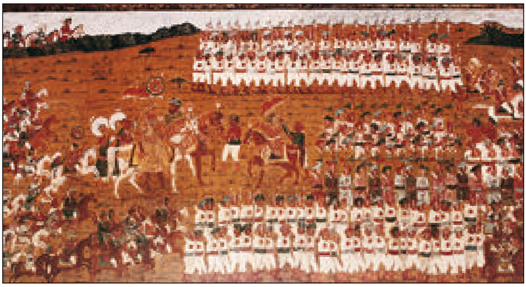
Mandya district. 16 km (10 miles) N of Mysore. ***Tel*** *(08232) 238 377.* 🚆 *from Mysore.* 🚌 *from Mysore. Autos and cycles available.*

Known to the British as Seringapatam, this island fortress in the Kaveri river enjoys historical significance as the site of the battles between the British and Tipu Sultan, the "Tiger of Mysore". The British finally stormed the citadel in 1799, killing Tipu and consolidating their power in South India. Today, none of the structures within the fort survive, barring the bridges across the two arms of the Kaveri river, from which the bathing ghats and the ramparts can be seen.

To the east and the south, a broad moat surrounds the polygonal bastions and turreted parapets constructed by the French engineers employed by Tipu. The Mysore Gate and Elephant Gate, to the south, are flanked by guardrooms. Sultan Battery, the dungeons where Tipu used to keep British prisoners, is to the north; nearby is the Water Gate, where Tipu was killed.

The **Sri Ranganatha Temple**, after which the island is named, is a large complex that was substantially restored in the 19th century. The inner sanctum enshrines an image

Representations of Hindu deities at the Keshava Temple

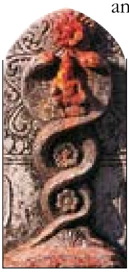


Mural depicting a battle at the Daria Daulat Bagh, Srirangapattana

of the reclining Vishnu and is approached through pillared halls and an open courtyard with a gilded lamp column.

The fort's eastern end has the **Jami Masjid**, erected by Tipu in 1787. It has an elevated prayer chamber.

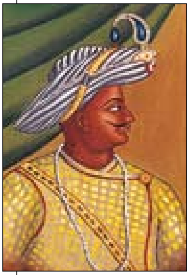
The **Daria Daulat Bagh**, Tipu Sultan's summer palace, built in 1787, stands in the middle of a beautiful garden near the river, a short distance south of the fort. Each of its sides has three arched openings in the centre and the whole palace is surrounded by a pillared verandah. The east and west walls of the verandah are both covered with murals, restored in 1855. On the west wall are scenes of battle, one of which illustrates Haidar Ali's victory over the British at Pollilur (1780), while the east wall depicts courtly scenes. The carved woodwork and the elegant painted floral designs on the wall reveal Mughal influence. The palace is now a museum, with paintings, maps and Tipu memorabilia on display. Further south, past the Church of the Abbé Dubois (where the learned French Jesuit priest and author lived between 1799 and 1823) and the British Cemetery, is the **Gumbaz** – the tombs of Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan. The walls of the chambers are decorated with the tiger-stripes motif *(bubri)* favoured by Tipu. The ebony and ivory doors were a gift from the viceroy, Lord Dalhousie, in 1855. The *sangam* (confluence) of the two arms of the Kaveri river is further south.



Snake shrine, Srirangapattana

🏛 Daria Daulat Bagh Museum
Tel *(08326) 252 045. ○ Sat-Thu.*

TIPU SULTAN: "TIGER OF MYSORE"



Portrait of Tipu Sultan (1750–99)

Tipu Sultan, the ruler of Mysore, stands head and shoulders above the many Indian rulers who were his contemporaries. He was a shrewd diplomat, expert soldier, excellent scholar and accomplished poet, and his military and administrative skills were complemented by his dream of a modern industrial state. The latter found expression in his cultivation of European contacts and employment of French engineers. The Sultan's main adversaries were the British who had conquered part of his father Haider Ali's territory and wealth in the first two Mysore Wars (1767–9 and 1780–84). Tipu waged two further wars against them, culminating in the fall of Srirangapattana in May 1799, where he died fighting.

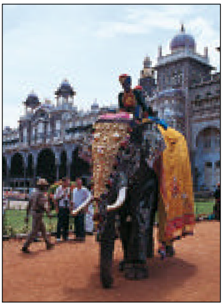
FESTIVALS IN KARNATAKA

Banashankari Temple Fair *(Jan/Feb)*, Badami. This 20-day festival combines religious rites with the excitement of a funfair. An annual cattle fair, specializing in white bulls, is held at the same time.

Hoysala Mahotsava *(Mar)*, Belur and Halebid. A festival of dance and music unfolds against the spectacular backdrop of these historic temples.

Royal Dasara *(Sep/Oct)*, Mysore. This grand, 10-day festival, known as Dussehra in North India, celebrates the victory of the goddess Chamundeshvari (Durga) over the buffalo demon, Mahishasura; it owes its origin to the Mahanavami festival *(see p531)*. A royal elephant carrying an image of the goddess leads a splendid display of military bands, sports and parades, while religious ceremonies worship the elephant, the horse and weapons such as the State sword. Firework displays, concerts and wrestling matches liven up the evenings. A descendant of the former ruling Wodeyars plays a pivotal part and the famous golden throne, generally not on display, is used for the rituals.

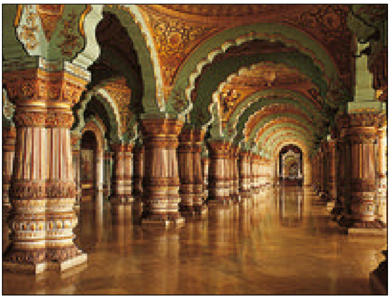
Hampi Festival *(Nov)*, Hampi. Well-known dancers and musicians from around the country participate in this lively event.



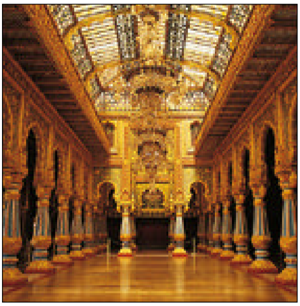
Caparisoned elephant at the Dasara celebrations, Mysore

Mysore: Amba Vilas Palace

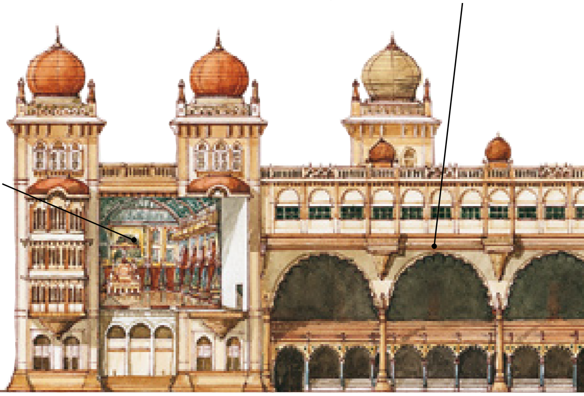
The magnificent Amba Vilas Palace, a treasure house of exquisite carvings and works of art from all over the world, was built by the Wodeyar rulers. The main block of this Indo-Saracenic building, with domes, turrets, arches and colonnades, was designed by Henry Irving in 1897. It replaced an earlier structure that was destroyed by a fire. During weekends and festivals, thousands of light bulbs enliven the palace's stern grey exterior.



Public Durbar Hall
The richly decorated gold-and-turquoise Durbar Hall, on the second floor, exudes royal splendour. On its rear wall are a series of paintings by Raja Ravi Varma.



Amba Vilas Hall
The Private Durbar Hall is smaller than, but as sumptuous as, the Public Hall. It is roofed with stained glass imported from Glasgow. The central part of its ceiling is supported by cast-iron columns and arches.



Mysore ❺

Mysore district. 140 km (87 miles) SW of Bangalore. 👥 *742,500.* 🚉 🚌 ℹ *KSTDC Transport Wing, Hotel Maurya Yatri Niwas, 2 Jhansi Laxmi Bai Rd, (0821) 242 3652.* 🎪 *Vairamudi Festival (Mar/Apr), Feast of St Philomena (Aug), Royal Dasara (Sep/Oct).*

Situated among fertile fields, and skirted by wooded hills, Mysore was the capital of the Wodeyar rulers, who were governors of southern Karnataka under the Vijayanagar kings. The Wodeyar dynasty ruled almost uninterrupted from 1399 until Independence, except for the 38-year rule of the Muslim warlord Haider Ali and his son, Tipu Sultan, in the 18th century *(see p517)*. Modern Mysore is the creation of Tipu Sultan who, in 1793, levelled the old city and built the present town. Today, Mysore is an important cultural centre, with the largest university in Karnataka. It is also renowned for its ivory work, silk-weaving, sandalwood incense and carvings.

Several elegant public buildings, erected under the Wodeyars, enhance the wide, tree-lined streets. In the heart of the city is the **Amba Vilas Palace**. To its west is **Jaganmohan Palace**, built in 1902 to mark the coronation ceremony of Krishnaraja III. It partly obscures a Neo-Classical structure, now the **Chamarajendra Art Gallery**, which houses an interesting collection of disparate objects including antique furniture, musical instruments, ceramics and ivory. On its top floor is a splendid collection of musical instruments, as well as magnificent paintings by the renowned 19th-century artist from Kerala, Raja Ravi Verma.

Near the northwestern corner of Amba Vilas Palace is **Krishnaraja Circle**, where a

The crouching Nandi on Chamundi Hill

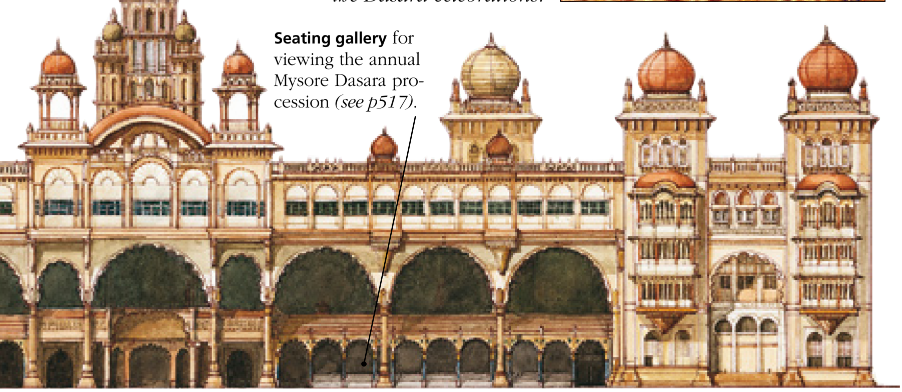
View of the Amba Vilas Palace, Mysore

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Ramvilas Rd. ***Tel*** *(0821) 242 2620.* ○ *daily, 10am–5pm.* *Royal Dasara (Sep/Oct).*

Golden Throne

Originally made of fig-wood overlaid with ivory, this jewelled throne was later plated with gold and silver. It is now brought out only during the Dasara celebrations.



Seating gallery for viewing the annual Mysore Dasara procession *(see p517).*

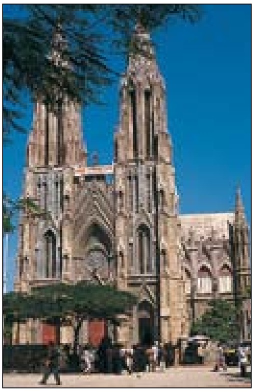
statue of Krishnaraja Wodeyar stands beneath a pavilion. The **Sayyaji Rao Road** that leads out from this circle is the principal shopping centre of the town. A short distance away is the Government House, the seat of the British Residents from 1805. Nearby, the **Cathedral of St Philomena**, with a stained-glass interior, is a new Neo-Gothic structure, which was completed in 1959.

In the western part of the city is the Neo-Classical **Manasa Gangotri**, the campus of Mysore University. The **Oriental Research Institute** here houses a collection of Sanskrit manuscripts, while the **Folklore Museum** has one of the most important ethnographic collections of South Indian toys, puppets and household objects, as well as two wooden chariots.

On the way to **Chamundi Hill**, 3 km (2 miles) southeast of Mysore, is **Lalitha Mahal Palace**, built in 1930. Formerly a private royal guest house, it is now a hotel *(see p712)*. About halfway up the hill is the Nandi monolith, dating to 1659. Carved out of a single boulder, it is 7.5 m (25 ft) long and 5 m (16 ft) high. The richly decorated bull is depicted crouching. The **Chamundeshvari Temple**, at the summit of the hill, was built in the 17th century by the Wodeyars and was later refurbished. It houses a beautifully decorated idol of Chamundeshvari, the family deity of the Wodeyar kings.

Environs

The picturesque **Brindavan Gardens** are 16 km (10 miles) to the north of the city. This popular picnic spot was laid out below the Krishnarajasagar Dam by Krishnaraja Wodeyar. The numerous fountains are illuminated every evening with beautiful multi-coloured lights.



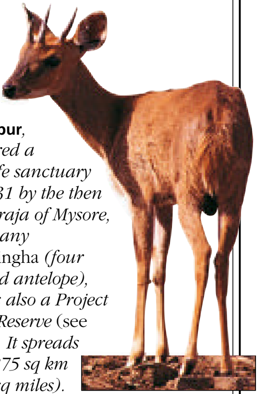
Cathedral of St Philomena

Wildlife Sanctuaries of Karnataka

Heron

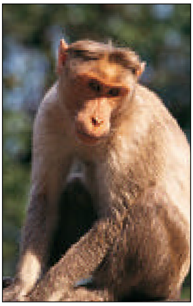
The Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, encompassing six contiguous wildlife sanctuaries, spans the states of Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Created to protect the extraordinary biodiversity of the last surviving tracts of tropical evergreen and deciduous forests of the Western Ghats, it includes the area over which the notorious sandalwood smuggler and bandit, Veerappan, once held sway. This reserve, along with the adjacent Mudumalai Sanctuary *(see p604)*, forms one of the most important migratory corridors for animals such as the Asian elephant and the Indian bison. These parks are within convenient reach of Bangalore *(see pp512–3)* and Mysore *(see pp518–9)*.

The Ranganthittoo Bird Sanctuary *covers 540 sq km (209 sq miles) of riverine islands in the middle of the Kaveri river and attracts a large number of water birds during the nesting season, especially from June to November.*



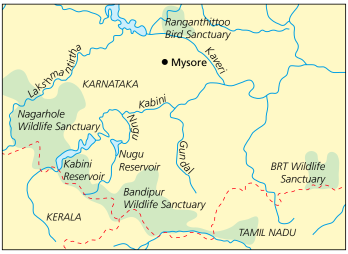
Bandipur, *declared a wildlife sanctuary in 1931 by the then Maharaja of Mysore, has many* chausingha *(four horned antelope), and is also a Project Tiger Reserve* (see p289). *It spreads over 875 sq km (338 sq miles).*

The BRT Wildlife Sanctuary, *east of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, is a corridor between the Western and Eastern Ghats. Covering an area of 540 sq km (209 sq miles), it supports a variety of birdlife, including storks.*



The Nagarhole Wildlife Sanctuary's *profusion of rivers and swampy grasslands keep it green all year. Established in 1983, the park has 645 sq km (249 sq miles) of deciduous vegetation. Its wildlife includes the bonnet macaque.*

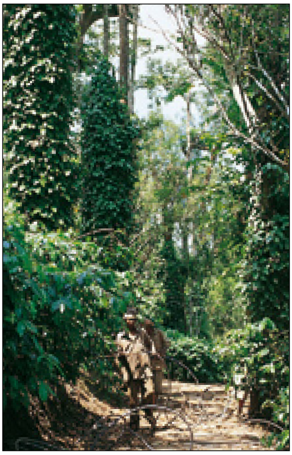
The Kabini Reservoir, *separating Bandipur from Nagarhole, offers fine views. The Kabini River Lodge nearby is an excellent place for sighting wildlife, and a good place to stay* (see p712).



Ranganthittoo Bird Sanctuary
Mysore
Kaveri
Lakshmanatirtha
KARNATAKA
Kabini
Nagarhole Wildlife Sanctuary
Nugu
Kabini Reservoir
Nugu Reservoir
Gundal
BRT Wildlife Sanctuary
Bandipur Wildlife Sanctuary
KERALA
TAMIL NADU

LOCATOR MAP

🟩 *Wildlife Sanctuaries*



Coffee plantation in Madikeri

Kodagu ❻

Kodagu district. 120 km (75 miles) S of Mysore. 🚌 ℹ *Department of Tourism, Madikeri, (08272) 228 580.* 🎪 *Keil Poldu (Sep), Huthri (Nov).*

Picturesquely set amid the forested mountains of the Western Ghats, the district of Kodagu (or Coorg) was an independent state until it was incorporated into the newly formed state of Karnataka in 1956. **Madikeri**, the district headquarters, situated 1,500 m (4,921 ft) above sea level and surrounded by rolling coffee and orange plantations, is a charming hill town, and a convenient base from which to explore Kodagu.

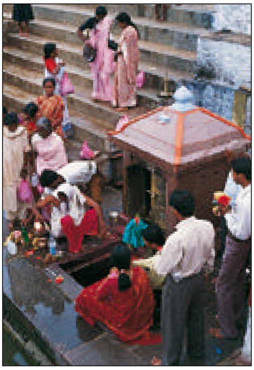
Madikeri (or Mercara) was once the capital of the Hindu Lingayat kings, who ruled for over 200 years from 1600, except for a brief period when Tipu Sultan seized power. The **Fort**, at the centre of the town, was built by the third Lingayat king in 1812. Within its stone ramparts, it contains the simple, unpretentions palace of the Lingayat rulers, along with a temple, an old church, a museum and the local prison.

The famous **Omkareshvara Shiva Temple**, situated in a hollow east of the Fort, was built by Linga Raja II in 1820 and dedicated to Vishnu and Shiva. The temple complex consists of brick buildings in the Indo-Saracenic style set in courtyards surrounded by pillared verandahs. Other notable monuments in Madikeri are the **Royal Tombs** of Raja Dodda Vira, his wife and his son, Linga Raja II. Curiously, these display a distinct Islamic influence, with onion-shaped domes, minarets and trellis work.

Kodagu remains pleasantly cool all year round, and the hills are at their most lush after the heavy monsoon showers when they make for delightful hikes. The walk up to **Abbey Falls**, 8 km (5 miles) from Madikeri, is popular and takes trekkers through forests and coffee plantations. Kodagu is renowned for its sprawling coffee plantations, first introduced in the mid-19th century by the British. The Kodava people bought back their land after Independence, but several estates still retain their British names. Kodagu produces some of the world's finest varieties of mild coffee; in fact, it is Karnataka's richest district because it accounts for the majority of coffee exports from the state. Coffee bushes are grown in the benevolent shade of large trees such as oak and rosewood, and in mixed plantations with crops of oranges, pepper vines and cardamom.

Nisargadhama, 27 km (17 miles) from Madikeri, is a beautiful forest retreat on a riverine island on the Kaveri. The bamboo cottages built here by the forest department are ideal for viewing wildlife.

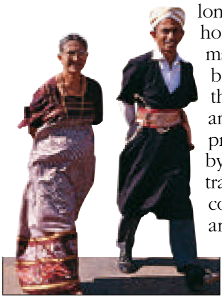
Talakaveri, 45 km (28 miles) southwest of Madikeri, at an altitude of 1,276 m (4,186 ft), is the source of the Kaveri, one of India's seven sacred rivers *(see p600)*; there is a small shrine built around the spring. At **Bhagamandala**, 36 km (22 miles) southwest of Madikeri, the Kaveri meets its two tributaries, Kanike and Sujoythi. Several shrines dot the area near the confluence – also the site of the striking Bhandeshvara temple, built in the Kerala style *(see p21)*.



The Talakaveri shrine, a place of great religious significance

THE KODAVAS

The people of Kodagu, known as Kodavas, are a distinct ethnic group, and have their own language, Coorgi. The Kodavas are proud of their martial origins and the country's armed forces have had a fair number of generals from this community. They may no longer live in the huge four-winged homes called *ain mane*, but their many traditional festivals, celebrated with great elan, still bring them together. Coorgi weddings are unique, in that there are no priests and they are solemnized by elders. The men dress in traditional *kupyas*, or long black coats tied at the waist by a gold- and red-tasseled sash, while women wear Coorgi-style saris with pleats at the back. Their distinctive cuisine includes tangy pork curry served with rice dumplings.



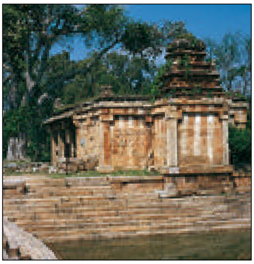
A Kodava couple in traditional dress

Melkote ⑦

Mandya district. 54 km (34 miles) N of Mysore. ℹ *Tourist Office, (08232) 238 377* 🚌 🎪 *Vairamudi (Mar/Apr).*

A picturesque hill town of shrines and monasteries, Melkote is a major pilgrimage centre for devotees of Vishnu; it is also associated with Ramanuja, the renowned Hindu philosopher and social reformer who died in 1137. Ramanuja is worshipped along with Vishnu in the **Narayana Temple**, in the southern part of town. South of the temple stands a solitary gopura, while perched on the summit of a hill to the northeast of the town, is the small **Narasimha Shrine**, overlooking the large Kalyani Tank.

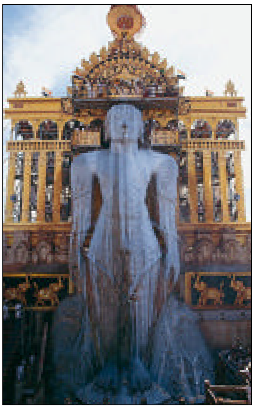
Daily life in Melkote revolves around temple rituals, and the tradition of religious learning introduced by Ramanuja survives in its many institutions, of which the Academy of Sanskrit Research is most famous.



Narasimha Shrine overlooking the Kalyani Tank at Melkote

Sravana Belgola ⑧

Hassan district. 145 km (90 miles) W of Bangalore. 🚌 ℹ *Tourist Office, (08176) 257 254.* 🎪 *Mahamastakabhisheka (every 12 years; last one was in 2005).*



The head-anointing ceremony at Sravana Belgola

This small town, situated between two granite hills, Indragiri and Chandragiri, is the most important Jain site in South India. It is dominated by the colossal 17.7-m (58-ft) high monolithic **Statue of Gommateshvara**, also known as Bahubali, son of the first Jain tirthankara *(see p396)*. On the summit of the 143-m (469-ft) high Indragiri Hill, the north-facing statue of the naked saviour stands on an anthill staring impassively ahead. Entwined around his legs and arms are creepers, indicating the length of time he stood immobile in meditation. An inscription at the base records its consecration in AD 981 by Chamundaraya, the powerful minister of Rajamalla IV, one of the Ganga kings.

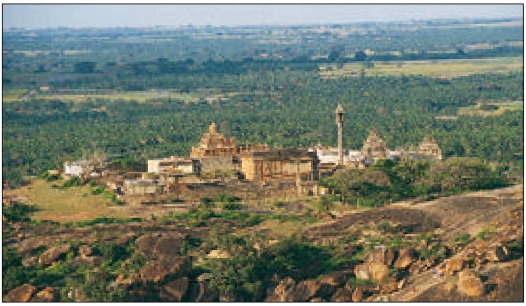
The town, which lies at the base of the hill, has a large tank as well as a number of Jain temples *(bastis)*. Perhaps the most interesting of these is the *matha*, near the steps leading to Indragiri Hill. The walls of its courtyard have a series of vivid 18th-century murals illustrating the past and present births of Parsvanatha, the 23rd *tirthankara*, as well as scenes from the annual fair held here. Some fine Jain bronzes are displayed in the sanctuary that opens off the courtyard.

On Chandragiri Hill, to the north of the town, is another cluster of *bastis* established by the 10th–12th century Ganga kings and their powerful ministers. The **Neminatha Basti**, commissioned by Chamundaraya, enshrines an image of Neminatha, the 22nd *tirthankara*. The adjoining **Chandragupta Basti** has miniature panels carved on perforated stone screens depicting episodes from the life of Bahubali and his royal disciple, Chandragupta. A 5-m (16-ft) high sculpture of Parsvanatha, the 23rd *tirthankara*, is enshrined in another nearby *basti*.

Every 12 years, Jainism's most important festival, the spectacular Mahamastakabhisheka (head-anointing ceremony) is held here. The festival commemorates the consecration of the Bahubali monolith, and attracts thousands of monks, priests and pilgrims. A special scaffold is erected behind the statue so that priests can ritually bathe the god with milk, water from the holy rivers, ghee, saffron, sandalwood paste, vermilion and flower petals. At the last ceremony, held in 1993, a specially-hired helicopter flew overhead, showering the statue with 20 kg (44 pounds) of gold leaf, 200 litres (423 pints) of milk, marigolds and jewels, to the delight of the assembled crowds.

Environs

The village of **Kambadahalli**, 15 km (9 miles) east of Sravana Belgola, is another Jain settlement. The 10th-century Panchakuta Basti houses a trio of *tirthankaras* in three separate shrines.



A view of Chandragiri Hill above Sravana Belgola

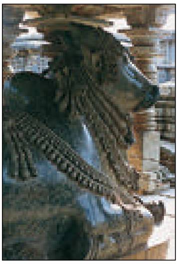
A columned Nandi pavilion in the Hoysaleshvara Temple, Halebid

Halebid ⑨

Hassan district. 213 km (132 miles) W of Bangalore. 🚉 *Hassan, 27 km (17 miles) S of town centre, then bus or taxi.* 🚌 *Cycles available on hire.* ℹ *Tourist Office, (08177) 273 224.*

Set amid a lush agricultural landscape ringed by distant hills, this isolated site was the Hoysala capital in the 12th and 13th centuries. While the palace has yet to be excavated, the stone ramparts that once surrounded the city can still be seen. Outside the ramparts, to the east, is the vast tank known as Dorasamudra, which was also the city's original name.

Today, the principal attraction of Halebid is the **Hoysaleshvara Temple**, begun in 1121 by King Vishnuvardhana, but never finished. This structure comprises a pair of identical temples, each with its own east-facing linga sanctuary opening on to a hall and a screened porch. Each temple is also preceded by a pavilion with a huge statue of Nandi, the bull-vehicle of Shiva. As the two halls are joined together to create a spacious columned interior, the temples function as a single monument. The outer walls are elevated on friezes of naturalistic and fanciful animals, interspersed with animated carvings of scenes from the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata (see pp26–7)*. Among the finest wall panels here are those of Shiva dancing on the outstretched skin of the elephant demon he had slain, Krishna playing the flute and Krishna holding up Mount Govardhan, on the south face of the southern sanctuary. On the north face of the northern sanctuary is a splendid Nataraja (Shiva as the Lord of Dance) and a panel depicting a crouching multi-armed and -headed Ravana creeping up on Shiva and Parvati seated on Mount Kailasa. Set on the plinth on which the temple is raised is a three-dimensional composition of a warrior plunging his sword into a leonine beast with a ferocious head, interpreted as the dynastic symbol of the martial Hoysala rulers. The landscaped garden in front of the Hoysaleshvara Temple serves as an **Archaeological Museum**. A panel here shows a majestic seated Ganesha. A short distance south of the complex is a group of 12th-century Jain *bastis*.



A magnificent seated Nandi at Halebid

🏛 Archaeological Museum
Tel *(08177) 263 067.* ○ *10am–5pm Sat–Thu.* ⊘

Belur ⑩

Hassan district. 17 km (11 miles) SW of Halebid. 🚉 *Hassan, 34 km (21 miles) SE of town centre, then bus or taxi.* 🚌 ℹ *Tourist Office, (08177) 222 209.*

One of the jewels of South Indian architecture, Belur's **Chennakeshava Temple** was built in 1117 by Vishnuvardhan to commemorate the Hoysala triumph over the Cholas *(see pp46–7)*. At the end of the town's main street, a towered *gopura*, erected by the kings of Vijayanagar *(see p530)* in the 16th century, marks the entrance to the temple. Inside is a spacious paved courtyard, surrounded by subsidiary shrines and colonnades. In the centre is the main temple, a single star-shaped sanctuary opening onto a columned hall fronted by a screened porch.

The entire surface of the grey-green schist structure is covered with richly textured relief carvings. The lintels have foliate frames running between open-mouthed aquatic monsters *(makaras)* with exuberantly foliated tails. The stone grilles that filter light into the porch are raised on friezes of elephants, lotus stems, garlands and amorous couples. Brackets fashioned as female dancers, musicians and huntresses, standing gracefully under perforated trees, support the sloping eaves above the grilles. Many bear the artists' signatures, a sign of their elevated status under the Hoysalas. Even finer bracket figures can be seen inside the temple.

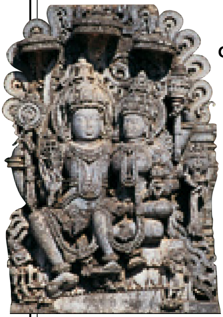
⛩ Chennakeshava Temple
Tel *(08177) 222 218* ○ *daily.*
● *to non-Hindus*

Belur's Chennakeshava Temple, in the centre of a large courtyard

Hoysala Art and Architecture

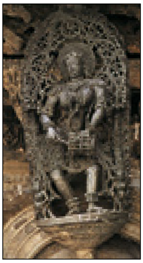
The temples of the Hoysala kings (12th–13th centuries) and their powerful ministers are among the wonders of South Indian art and architecture. They embody a fusion of the curving towers *(shikharas)* of North India with the columned *mandapas* of the south, and are characterized by their unique star-shaped plan and their rich surface decoration. The dense imagery of the basement friezes and wall panels, sculpted with religious and mythological scenes, as well as the exquisite bracket figures, are fashioned out of grey-green schist, a material that permits beautifully intricate carving.

Frieze with mythological scene

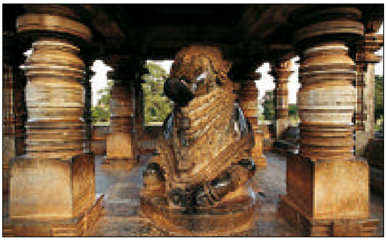


Gods *seated with their consorts, such as this remarkable rendering of the Lakshmi-Narayana theme from Belur, are carved in full detail and set into the outer walls of Hoysala temples.*

Flowing foliate patterns, *derived from lotus stems and leaves, run continuously around the basements of Hoysala temples.*



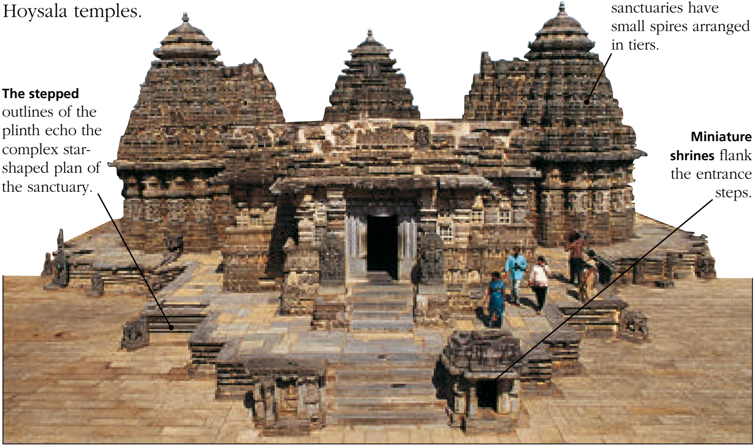
Bracket figures, *fashioned as beautiful female dancers, are the highlights of Hoysala temples. This sculpture of a female drummer from Belur has an engraving of the artist's signature.*



Mandapa interiors *have spacious aisles lined with massive, highly polished lathe-turned columns, with undulating profiles and sharp ridges. A good example is this magnificent Nandi pavilion opposite the main shrine at Halebid.*

THE SOMNATHPUR TEMPLE

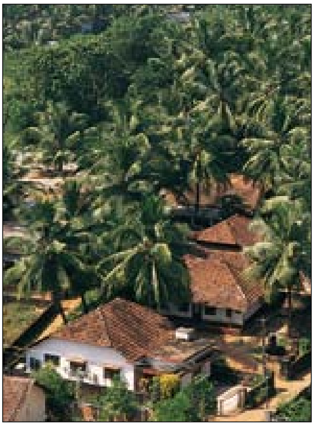
The perfectly proportioned triple-sanctuaried Keshava Temple at Somnathpur *(see p516)*, built in 1268, was the last of the great Hoysala temples.



Towers over Hoysala sanctuaries have small spires arranged in tiers.

The stepped outlines of the plinth echo the complex star-shaped plan of the sanctuary.

Miniature shrines flank the entrance steps.



Terracotta-tiled rooftops in Mangalore

Mangalore ⑪

South Kanara district. 357 km (222 miles) W of Bangalore. 👥 *399,000.* ✈ *20 km (12 miles) N of city centre, then taxi or bus.* 🚆 🚌 ℹ *Karnataka Tourism, Hotel Indraprastha, (0824) 242 1692.*

This thriving port on the estuary of the Netavati and Gurpur rivers is the largest city in Dakshina (South) Kanara, the coastal district famous for its coffee, cashewnut and pepper plantations. Rich harvests of these crops have attracted traders through the ages. Arab merchants first came here in the 13th and 14th centuries, and were later followed by the Portuguese and the British.

Mangalore today, presents a panorama of terracotta-roofed houses, whitewashed churches, temples and mosques, nestling amid groves of coconut palms. Among its historic monuments is the old watchtower, known as **Sultan's Battery**, built of laterite in 1763 by Haider Ali of Mysore *(see p518).*

Mangalore's 19th-century churches include the domed Church of the Most Holy Rosary and the Jesuit College of St Aloysius. Situated at the foot of Kadiri Hill, 3 km (2 miles) north of the city, is the 17th-century **Manjunath Temple**, with some superb bronze images of the Buddha, dating to the 10th–11th centuries, installed in the porch.

Environs

The pleasant beach resort at **Ullal** is just 12 km (7 miles) south of the city. Numerous Jain temples and monasteries dot the villages around Mangalore. The finest is the elaborate 15th-century Chandranatha Basti at **Mudabidri**, 35 km (22 miles) to the northwest. Dominating the summit of a hill at **Karkala**, 18 km (11 miles) further north, is the 13-m (43-ft) high Gommateshvara monolith (1432), an obvious imitation of the larger and earlier one at Sravana Belgola *(see p522).* The 16th-century Chaturmukha Basti, a perfectly symmetrical temple with a central chamber enshrining 12 *tirthankaras*, stands at the base of the hill. The pilgrimage town of **Dharmasthala**, 75 km (47 miles) to the east, is well-known for its Shiva temple. Its Gommateshvara statue was installed in 1973.

Udipi ⑫

Udipi district. 58 km (36 miles) N of Mangalore. 👥 *113,100.* 🚆 ℹ *Tourist Office, Krishna Building, Car Street, (0820) 252 9718.* 🎉 *Pargaya (Jan), Chariot Festival (Aug).*

All roads in Udipi lead to the large open square in the city centre where the **Krishna Temple** is located. This is the focal point of all activity, spiritual and commercial, in this bustling pilgrim town. The famous 13th-century Vaishnava teacher, Madhava, is believed to have founded the temple by installing an image of Krishna he had rescued from a shipwreck. Parked outside the temple are the festival chariots with dome-like towers made of bamboo and covered with colourful textiles. After passing through the entrance gate, pilgrims bathe in the tank before entering the main sanctuary with its silver doors and viewing window. Surrounding the square are other temples and the eight *mathas* associated with the Krishna Temple, built in the typical Kanara style with wooden verandahs and sloping roofs.

Udipi also lends its name to the inexpensive eateries that originated here. Catering to a local clientele, the menu concentrated on traditional South Indian vegetarian food, such as the *masala dosa* and *idli (see pp554–5).* These restaurants, with their affordable rates, quick turnover and simple but good food, are now found all over India.

Environs

About 5 km (3 miles) west of Udipi is **Malpe Beach**, where fishing boats can be hired for excursions. **Manipal**, 4 km (2.5 miles) to the east, is an industrial and educational centre. The **House of Vijayanath Shennoy** in Manipal, now a museum, is an example of a traditional home, with a fine collection of everyday objects.

🏛 **House of Vijayanath Shennoy**
○ *Mon–Sat.*

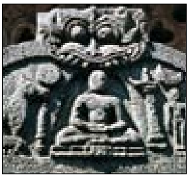
Priests performing rituals during the Chariot Festival at Udipi

Shop selling religious paraphernalia at Barkur

Barkur ⑬

Udipi district. 71 km (44 miles) N of Mangalore. 🚉 🎪 *Navaratri (Sep/Oct).*

The coastal town of Barkur was a flourishing port in the 15th and 16th centuries until its river silted up. Today, the town's main attractions are its many temples with their typical sloping terracotta-tiled roofs. The largest is the **Panchalingeshvara Temple**, situated at the southern end of the town. Devotees gather at the stepped tank near the temple for a ritual bath before worshipping at the two east-facing linga shrines. The other temples include one dedicated to both Shiva and Ganesha, and the smaller Someshvara and Somanatheshvara temples.



Detail of a stone panel, Bhatkal

Environs

The little hamlet of **Mekkekattu**, 8 km (5 miles) north of Barkur, has shrine of painted *bhuta* figures (local spirits). These are copies of the originals, which were removed to New Delhi's Crafts Museum *(see pp80–81)* and the Folklore Museum in Mysore *(see p519)*, after the shrine's renovation in the 1960s. The vividly painted deity Nandikeshvara, (the winged bull) stands in the lower shrine while his consort occupies the upper one. Fierce guardian deities crowd a side chamber.

Bhatkal ⑭

North Kanara district. 165 km (102 miles) N of Mangalore. 👥 *31,800.* 🚉 🎪 *Navaratri (Sep/Oct).*

Located along a picturesque highway that follows the coastline, this town was an important port during the 16th and 17th centuries. The many beautiful Jain and Hindu stone temples found here date from those days of prosperity. Standing in the town's main street are the Chandranatheshvara and Parsvanatha *bastis*. Situated 2 km (1.3 miles) to the east, on the other side of the highway, is the **Khetapai Narayan Temple**, built in 1540. Its sanctuary and hall are enclosed within stone screens fashioned to imitate wood. Finely sculpted guardian figures flank the doorway.

Environs

Tucked away in the forested hills at **Kollur**, 35 km (22 miles) southeast of Bhatkal, is a shrine dedicated to the goddess Mukambika. This is a very popular pilgrimage.

India's highest waterfalls, the **Jog Falls**, lie 60 km (37 miles) northeast of Bhatkal. They can be seen at the head of the Sharavati river, framed by jagged pinnacles of rock.

Gokarna ⑮

North Kanara district. 200 km (124 miles) N of Mangalore. 🚉 ℹ *Tourist Office, Main Rd, Karwar, (08382) 221 172.* 🎪 *Shivratri (Feb/Mar).*

Spectacularly situated by the Arabian Sea, Gokarna is a favourite with visitors in search of sun, sea and sand. A charming little town with two principal streets and clusters of traditional tile-roofed brick houses, Gokarna is also an important centre of Sanskrit learning.

The **Mahabaleshvara Temple**, at the western end of the main street, was destroyed by the Portuguese in 1714 and then rebuilt later in the 18th century. In the sanctuary is a stone linga, encased in brass, placed on a coiled stone serpent. The floor of the hall in front has an intricate engraving of a giant tortoise. Shiva's birthday (Feb/Mar) is celebrated here with great fanfare. The two great temple chariots lead a procession through the town's narrow streets, while priests chant hymns in praise of Shiva.

BEACHES AROUND GOKARNA

Long stretches of beautiful, unspoilt beaches extend along the western coast from Gokarna to Karwar, a seaside town 60 km (37 miles) to the north. South of Gokarna are the Half Moon and Paradise beaches, while nearer Karwar are the lovely Binaga and Araga beaches. The gently curving bays, fringed by palms, are still occupied by small fishing villages where life revolves around the sea and the daily catch. Tourism remains unknown and only a few simple shacks offer basic food and shelter.

Waves breaking against rocks at a beach near Karwar

The two-storeyed Vidyashankara Temple at Sringeri

Sringeri ⑯

Chikmagalur district. 100 km (62 miles) NE of Mangalore. 🚉 🚌
Navaratri (Sep/Oct).

The small settlement of Sringeri, tucked away in the forested ranges of the Western Ghats, is today an important pilgrimage centre and one of the most powerful seats of orthodox Hinduism in South India. This was where Shankaracharya, *(see p648)*, the great 9th-century philosopher and social reformer, established the first of his four *mathas*; the other three are at Joshimath in the Himalayas *(see p187)*, Puri *(see p312)* to the east and Dwarka *(see p427)* to the west. Today, his successors (also known as Shankaracharyas) wield tremendous influence in both religious and temporal matters, while the *mathas* still function as centres of spiritual learning.

Standing on a paved terrace are two temples overlooking the Tunga river, crammed with sacred fish. The smaller temple, dedicated to Sharada, a popular form of the goddess Saraswati, is the principal destination for local pilgrims. Next to it is the 16th-century **Vidyashankara Temple**, where the Shankaracharya is worshipped in the form of a linga. This stone structure, which stands raised on a high platform, is laid out on an almost circular star-shaped plan. Friezes depicting the many forms of Shiva and Vishnu embellish the faceted walls. The hall that precedes the inner sanctum has massive piers carved as rearing *yalis* (mythical leonine beasts).

Floral offerings at Sringeri's temple

Chitradurga ⑰

Chitradurga district. 200 km (124 miles) N of Bangalore. ℹ Kamana Bhavi Extension, 8th Ward Fort Rd; *(08194) 234 466.* 🚉 🚌

Located at the base of a rugged chain of hills, this town was a prominent outpost of the Vijayanagar Empire *(see pp530–31)*. Later, in the17th–18th centuries, it became the headquarters of a line of local chiefs known as Bedas, until it was occupied by Haider Ali *(see p517)* in 1799 and then by the British.

The **Fort**, defined by walls of huge granite blocks, rises above the town. A series of three gates leads to the irregular inner zone, strewn with striking granite boulders. There are several small temples here, as well as a number of ceremonial gateways erected by the Bedas. The platforms and pavilions within the compound of the Sampige Siddheshvara Temple mark the spot where the Bedas were crowned. The remains of rubble and mud-built granaries and residences, and a large circular well can be seen nearby.

In the town below, the local **Government Museum** displays artifacts from surrounding sites. The 17th-century Ucchalingamma Temple is on the main street and should not be missed.

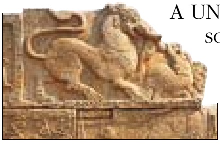
Fort
○ *daily.*

Government Museum
Tel *(08194) 224 202.* ○ *Mon-Sat.*

The fort at Chitradurga, with gateways and shrines dotting the boulder-strewn landscape

A view of Hampi, with a ruined bridge over the Tungabhadra river in the foreground ▷

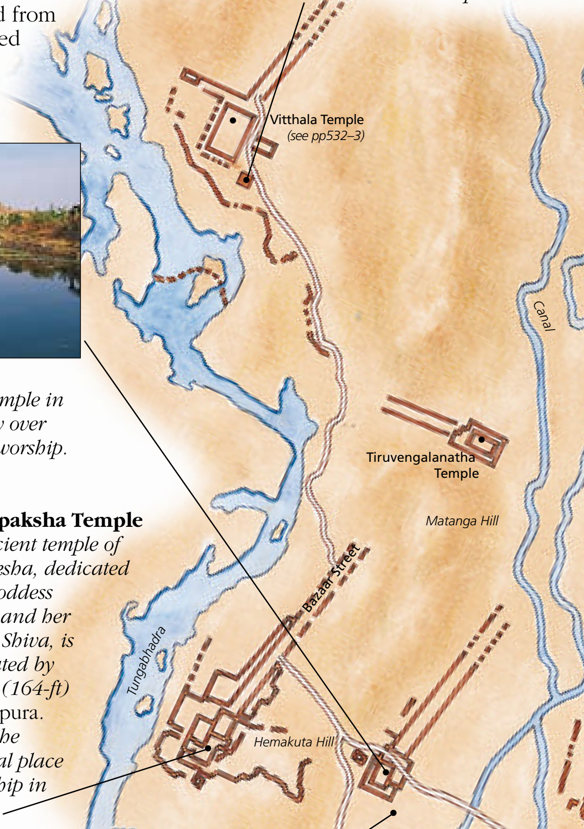
Hampi ⑱



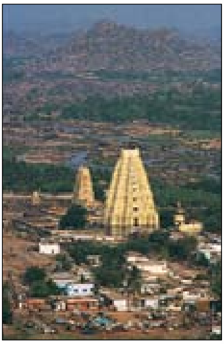
Sculpted staircase, Mahanavami platform

A UNESCO World Heritage Site on the south bank of the Tungabhadra river, Hampi boasts the evocative ruins of Vijayanagar or the "City of Victory". The capital of three generations of Hindu rulers for more than 200 years, Hampi reached its zenith under Krishnadeva Raya (r.1510–29) and Achyuta Raya (r.1529–42). The site, which comprises the Sacred and Royal Centres, has a superb location, with rocky ridges and granite boulders acting as natural defences. The urban core of the city was fortified and separated from the Sacred Centre by an irrigated valley, through which ancient canals and waterways still run.

King's Balance
Ruling kings were weighed on this balance against gold or grain, for distribution to the poor.



Krishna Temple
Krishnadeva Raya erected this temple in 1516 to commemorate his victory over Orissa. It is no longer a place of worship.



★ Virupaksha Temple
The ancient temple of Virupaksha, dedicated to the goddess Pampa and her consort Shiva, is dominated by a 50-m (164-ft) high gopura. This is the principal place of worship in Hampi.

★ Narasimha Monolith
Carved out of a single boulder in 1528, this awe-inspiring image of Vishnu shows him in his half man-half lion incarnation (see p679).

STAR SIGHTS

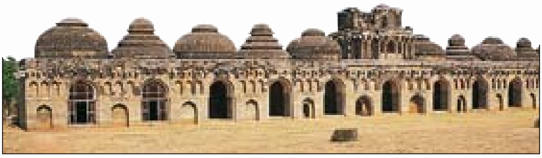
- ★ Virupaksha Temple
- ★ Narasimha Monolith
- ★ Lotus Mahal

Chariot Festival

The bustling Bazaar Street is the main centre of activity and the venue for the colourful Chariot Festival. The temple chariot carries the main deity through the streets so it can be publicly honoured.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Bellary district. 315 km (196 miles) NW of Bangalore. 🚆 *Hospet, 13 km (8 miles) W of site.* 🚌 ℹ *Bazaar St, (08394) 228 537.* ☞ **Virupaksha Temple** ○ *daily.* **Lotus Mahal** 💰 *also covers the Vitthala Temple.* 🚩 *Chariot Festival (Feb), Hampi Festival (Nov). Foreigners must register at Virupaksha Temple Police Station.*

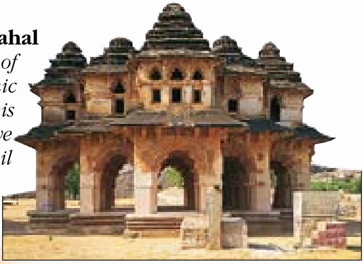


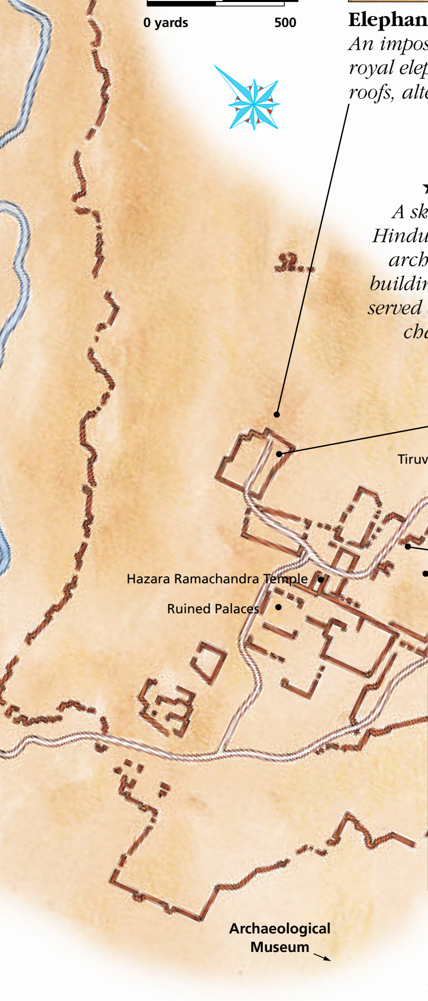
Elephant Stables

An imposing structure of 11 chambers, this once housed the royal elephants. Especially noteworthy are the polygonal roofs, alternating with smooth or ribbed domes.

★ Lotus Mahal

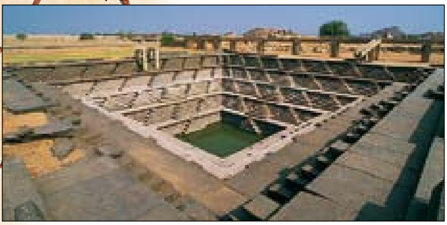
A skilful blend of Hindu and Islamic architecture, this building may have served as a council chamber for the king.




0 metres 500
0 yards 500
Tiruvengalanatha Temple
Hospet
Hazara Ramachandra Temple
Ruined Palaces
Great Bath
Archaeological Museum

The Queen's Bath, an open-air structure, seems to have been designed for royal recreation.

The Mahanavami Platform was used by kings during the Mahanavami festival *(see p517)*, and for pre-war ceremonies.

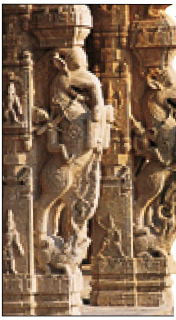


Stepped Tank

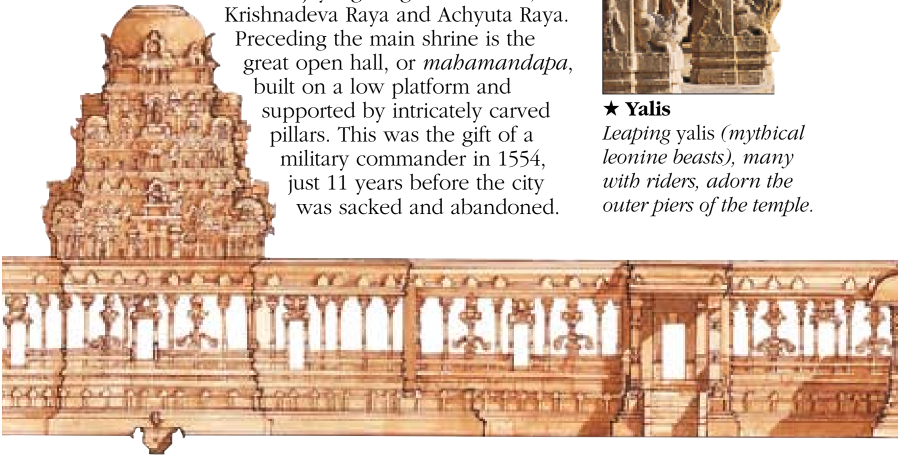
This small, square tank with multiple steps was fed by a water chute, part of an extensive "hydraulic system" that brought water to the Royal Centre.

Hampi: Vitthala Temple

The grandest of all the religious monuments in the Sacred Centre, the Vitthala Temple represents the high point of Vijayanagar art and architecture. Though its founder remains unknown, it was enlarged in the 16th century by two of Vijaynagar's greatest rulers, Krishnadeva Raya and Achyuta Raya. Preceding the main shrine is the great open hall, or *mahamandapa*, built on a low platform and supported by intricately carved pillars. This was the gift of a military commander in 1554, just 11 years before the city was sacked and abandoned.



★ Yalis
Leaping yalis *(mythical leonine beasts), many with riders, adorn the outer piers of the temple.*



RECONSTRUCTION OF THE TOWER
This shows the pyramidal vimana (tower), over the main sanctuary of the Vitthala Temple, as it looked when it was built in the 16th century.

Relief
A niche in a stone pillar has a superb rendering of Garuda, the eagle mount of Vishnu.

STAR FEATURES

- ★ Yalis
- ★ Chariot

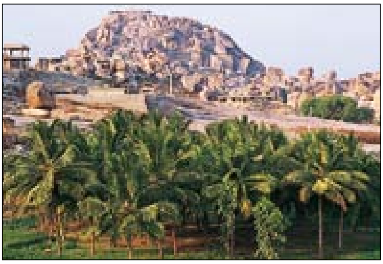
Exploring Hampi

The fabled city of the Vijayanagar kings (see pp530–31), covering an area of around 20 sq km (8 sq miles), sprawls across a spectacular barren and boulder-strewn landscape.

The **Sacred Centre**, on the southern bank of the Tungabhadra river, is dominated by the impressive **Virupaksha Temple**. It is dedicated to a form of Shiva (Virupaksha), known here as Pampapati (the "Lord of Pampa"), and commemorates his wedding to Pampa, the goddesss of the Tungabhadra. In front is the colonnaded **Bazaar Street** that dates mainly from the 16th to the mid-17th centuries, when it teemed with pilgrims and travellers in search of exotic wares. A path beside the river leads past the **Kodandarama Temple**, with its figures of Rama, Sita and Lakshman carved on to a boulder inside the sanctuary. The bathing ghats here are considered to be the holiest at the site.

Beyond lies the **Temple of Achyuta Raya**, one of the major Hindu complexes at Hampi, dating from 1534 and dedicated to Tiruvengalanatha, the form of Vishnu that is venerated at Tirupati (see p678). Its perfect plan of two concentric enclosures, each entered by a towering gopura to the north, is clearly visible from the summit of **Matanga Hill**. The riverside path continues to the Vitthala Temple, from where a road proceeds to the village of **Kamalapuram**, where the **Archaeological Museum** is located. En route is a gateway with a damaged façade of windows and battlements.

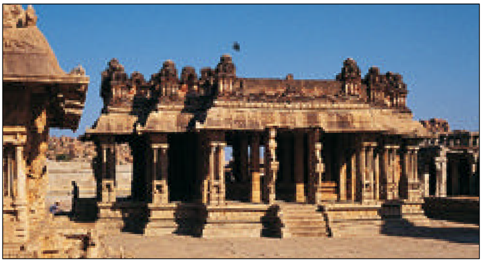
The road that runs south from Hampi village, through the Sacred Centre, leads up **Hemakuta Hill**, scattered with numerous pre- and early Vijayanagar shrines, many with small pyramidal towers. A large image of the elephant god, Ganesha, carved on a



A view of Matanga Hill

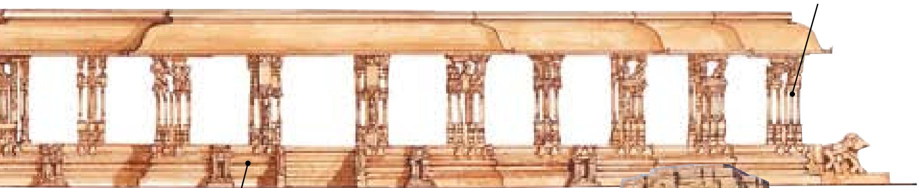
VISITORS' CHECKLIST

E of the Sacred Centre. ○ *daily.*
free on Fri.



Vitthala Temple
This striking temple with its elaborate mandapas *(columned halls) is dedicated to Vitthala, an incarnation of Vishnu the Preserver, the second god in the Hindu Trinity.*

Musical Columns
Small hollow columns emit different tones when lightly tapped.

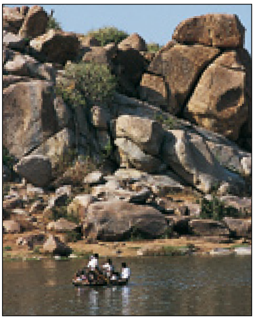


Frieze Detail
This panel depicts a trio of celestial nymphs riding on parrots.

★ Chariot
This shrine in front of the temple is dedicated to Garuda and is fashioned as a stone chariot.

boulder, marks the top of the ridge. Further south is the **Krishna Temple**, erected in the early 16th century during the reign of Krishnadeva Raya. It is entered through a massive, though partly ruined gopura. The colonnaded street to the east now runs through fields of sugarcane, while the square tank nearby still stores water. As it continues south, the road travels past the tremendous Narasimha Stone Monolith, a representation of Vishnu's man-lion incarnation (see p679).

Fortified walls enclose the **Royal Centre**. At the latter's core is the superb **Hazara Rama Temple**, built by Deva Raya I, a Vijayanagar king of the 15th century. Its outer walls are covered with friezes that depict ceremonies of the Mahanavami festival. Reliefs of episodes from the Ramayana can be seen here. Around the temple are excavated remains of palaces, baths and a hundred-columned audience hall, while to its north are the Elephant Stables and the **Lotus Mahal**.



A coracle ferrying people across the Tungabhadra river

🏛 Archaeological Museum
Kamalapuram, (08394) 241 237.
○ *10am-5pm Sat-Thu.*

Environs
The historic village of **Anegondi** lies on the opposite bank of the Tungabhadra river. Until a bridge under construction becomes operational, it can be reached only on the coracles that have plied the river for centuries.

An important settlement before the establishment of Vijayanagar, Anegondi's now dilapidated palaces, temples and bathing ghats still preserve vestiges of their former glory. The Kalyan Mahal, a palace-like building reminiscent of Hampi's Lotus Mahal (see p531), stands in the central square. Nearby are a temple and a 14th-century gateway. The massive walls and rounded bastions of Anegondi's citadel enclose the rocky hills lying west of the main town. Anegondi is also of interest for its traditional mud-clad houses.

An outer wall of Gadag's Someshvara Temple, with temple towers in relief

Gadag ⑲

Gadag district. 450 km (280 miles) NW of Bangalore. 🚉 🚌 ℹ *Hotel Durga, Vihar Complex.* 🧺 *daily.*

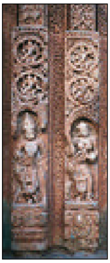
An important cotton collection centre, the sleepy little town of Gadag comes to life during the cotton season in May and June. During these months, the cotton market hums with activity and is well worth a visit.

A number of late Chalukyan monuments (11th–12th centuries) in the city indicate its historic past. Standing to the south is the **Trikuteshvara Temple**, remarkable for its three sanctuaries facing a common, partly open hall. Inclined slabs that serve as balcony seats are decorated with figurative panels, and are overhung by steeply angled eaves. Inside the hall, the columns have figures arranged in shallow niches. The east sanctuary accommodates three lingas, while the one to the south is dedicated to the goddess Saraswati.

In the middle of the city stands the **Someshvara Temple**. Though abandoned and now in a dilapidated state, its intricate carvings are fairly well preserved. Look for the doorways to the hall, which have densely carved figures and foliation.

Environs

The small village of **Lakkundi**, 11 km (7 miles) southeast of Gadag, has temples dating from the 11th–12th centuries, built of grey-green chloritic schist. Surrounded by mud houses, a number of such temples are tucked away down narrow streets. Jain Basti, the largest temple, has a five-storeyed tower. Its basement is adorned with friezes of elephants and lotus petals. Lathe-turned columns are seen on the porch. The nearby Kashi Vishvanatha Temple has a pair of sanctuaries facing each other across a common porch. Relief carvings of a pair of *makaras* or aquatic monsters, sitting on the walls, are typical motifs of late Chalukyan art.

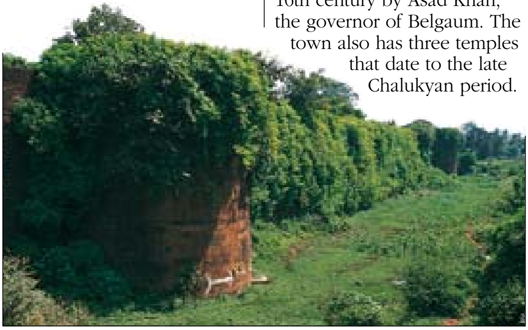


Sculpted figures

Belgaum ⑳

Belgaum district. 502 km (312 miles) NW of Bangalore. 🚉 🚌 ℹ *Tourist Office, Ashoka Nagar, (0831) 247 0879.*

This bustling city, on the border with Maharashtra, was an important garrison town under the British. Even today, the cantonment, with its bungalows and barracks, has a significant military presence. Earlier, in the 16th and 17th centuries, Belgaum was a provincial centre under the Adil Shahi rulers of Bijapur *(see p542)*, the Marathas of Pune *(see p471)*, as well as the Mughals when they occupied this part of Karnataka. The **Fort** to the east is unusually elliptical in layout and its stone walls incorporate many reused temple blocks. The **Safa Mosque** nearby was built in the first half of the 16th century by Asad Khan, the governor of Belgaum. The town also has three temples that date to the late Chalukyan period.



The elliptical fort at Belgaum

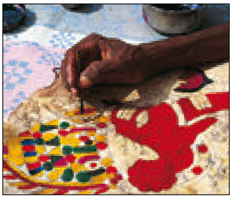
Performing Arts of Karnataka

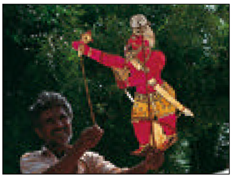
Karnataka has a rich and vibrant performing arts tradition. Story telling, with the help of media such as paintings and leather puppets, was among the most popular folk entertainments in the northern and northeastern part of the state, and in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh, before the advent of the cinema. Itinerant folk performers would delight rural audiences with stirring tales of good and evil, based on mythological episodes. A number of dance-dramas, such as the Yakshagana, developed in South Kanara, the region of Karnataka that borders Kerala. As in Kathakali *(see p657)*, Yakshagana actors dress in awe-inspiring costumes to perform a heavily mimetic dance, while the singer recites the story to the accompaniment of music.

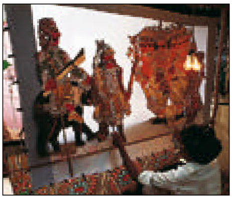
String puppet

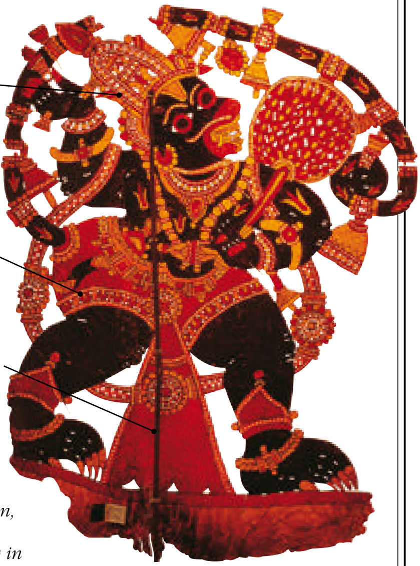
KARNATAKA'S LEATHER PUPPETS

Huge figures made of goatskin are punched with holes of various shapes to allow light to filter through, thus creating the interplay of light and coloured shadow, so essential to shadow theatre. The chief puppeteer recites the story, while his assistants provide musical accompaniment.


Figures *are etched on the prepared skin with a sharp instrument, then cut along the outline and coloured.*


The chief puppeteer *manipulates the puppet with the help of an attached stick.*


Performances *take place at night. A light is placed behind a thin cotton screen, so that the audience, sitting in front, sees the moving shadows.*


Perforations on the figure allow light to pass through.

Bright colours and outlines are combined to create striking efects.

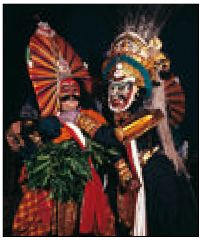
A stick is attached for manipulation.

Hanuman, the Monkey God, a major character in the *Ramayana*

YAKSHAGANA

This folk dance-drama originated in the early 16th century. An all-male cast consisting of about 20 actors and musicians act out a repertoire that is inspired mainly by episodes from the great epics *(see pp26–7)*, especially the *Mahabharata*. All-night performances, organized at the behest of a wealthy patron on special occasions, take place in the open, and no particular props are needed. Yakshagana's spectacular costumes are enhanced by tall headgear, a profusion of ornaments and elaborate make-up.

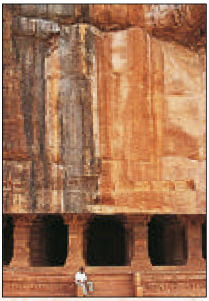
A man creating the elaborate headgear

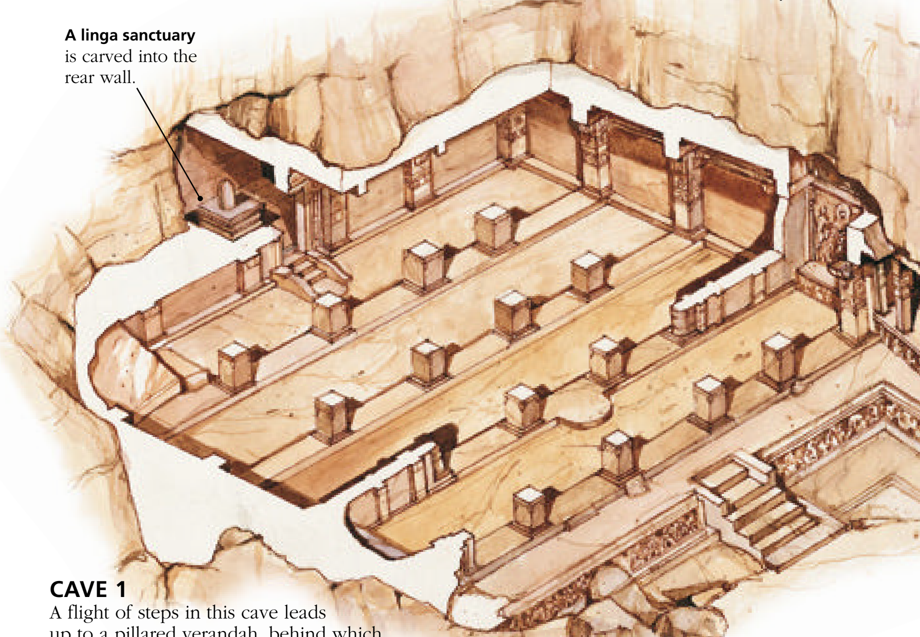

Actors performing a scene from the *Mahabharata*

Badami ㉑

Coiled Serpent, Ceiling, Cave 1

Dramatically situated within a horseshoe of red sandstone cliffs, overlooking the green waters of a large lake, this historic town was the capital of the powerful early Chalukya kings, who ruled the Deccan during the 6th–7th centuries AD. These rulers also held sway at Pattadakal *(see pp538–9)* and Aihole *(see pp540–41)*. Among the rock-cut and structural monuments, the most richly decorated are the cave temples, which are carved into the cliff on the southern side. Of these, Cave 1 is dedicated to Shiva, Caves 2 and 3 to Vishnu, and Cave 4 to the Jain saints.


Columned verandah, Cave 3

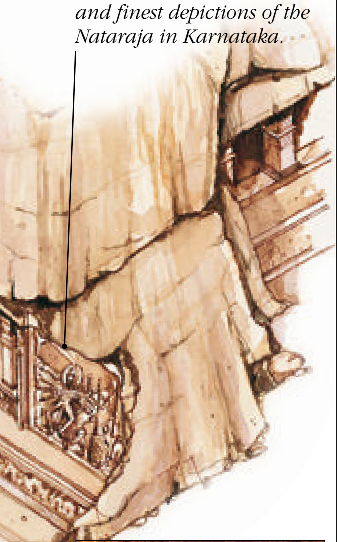

A linga sanctuary is carved into the rear wall.

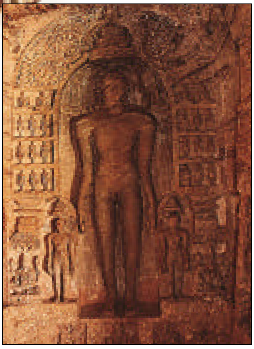
CAVE 1
A flight of steps in this cave leads up to a pillared verandah, behind which is a square, columned hall with a small sanctuary carved into the rear wall. The highlights here are the Nataraja panel and the carved panels on the ceiling.

Cave 2
This Vaishnava cave has a superb frieze of Varaha, the boar incarnation of Vishnu, on one end of the porch. A row of dwarfs is carved below it.

Cave 3
The verandah of this large and beautiful cave has an enormous four-armed figure of Vishnu seated on Adisesha, the serpent whose five hoods spread protectively over his crown. At his feet is the bird Garuda, his mount. This is the only cave with an inscription, dated AD 578.

Nataraja Panel
This 12-armed dancing Shiva is one of the earliest and finest depictions of the Nataraja in Karnataka.





Cave 4
Standing and seated Jain tirthankaras *cover the walls and columns in Cave 4, on top of a cliff. Some of these were added in the 11th and 12th centuries, when this part of Karnataka was governed by a later line of Chalukya rulers.*

Exploring Badami

Most of Badami's temples are situated on the imposing cliff that lies north of the man-made Agastya Lake. The boulder-strewn landscape and the large lake acted as natural defences of the site. Standing on the embankment is the 11th-century **Yellamma Temple**, with its multi-storeyed tower. Further away, inside the village, is the **Jambulinga Temple**, dating to AD 699, with triple shrines dedicated to Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva opening off a common *mandapa*. The **Bhutanatha Temple** is scenically located at the end of the lake and was built in several phases. The core shrine, with a pyramidal tower, is from the 6th–7th centuries, while the porch, embellished with angled eaves and overlooking the water, dates to the 11th century. Several boulders lying around the temple have reliefs of a sleeping Vishnu, and a seated Jain figure. Lesser shrines nearby show the pyramidal layered towers that are typical of the late Chalukya style.

The **Archaeological Museum**, on the north side of the lake, displays a magnificent triangular panel depicting Brahma surrounded by elaborate foliage; this piece must have once surmounted a free-standing portal. Other items of interest include a squatting female divinity with a lotus head, and two panels showing Shiva – spearing a demon and shooting arrows as he rides in a chariot.

Steps ascend through a rugged gorge to the 7th-century **Upper Shivalaya Temple** that crowns the cliffs rising to the north of the town. Only the walls of the passageway and the multi-storeyed tower capped with a square-domed roof still stand; the *mandapa* in front has been dismantled. Its simple basement mouldings and wall pilasters are typical of early structural architecture under the Chalukyas. Diminutive scenes of Krishna holding up Mount Govardhana, and Narasimha disembowelling his victim, are carved intricately on the walls. Perched on top of an isolated boulder near the main road north of the town, is the **Mallegitti Shivalaya Temple**, a well-preserved 7th-century structure. Perforated stone windows flank sculptured panels of Vishnu and Shiva, topped with garlands.

The tower of the Upper Shivalaya Temple

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Bagalkot district. 480 km (298 miles) NW of Bangalore. 🚆 🚌
ℹ *Karnataka Tourism, Hotel Mayura Chalukya, (08357) 220 117.* **Caves** ○ *daily.* 📷 📷
Archaeological Museum ***Tel*** *(08352) 220 047.* ○ *10am–5pm, Sat–Thu.* 📷

Environs

A popular Devi shrine, facing a large tank dating from the 18th century, is situated at **Banashankari**, 5 km (3 miles) east of Badami. At **Mahakuta**, 14 km (9 miles) to the east, a group of 7th-century temples built in contrasting North- and South-Indian styles *(see p20)*, are clustered around a small tank.

The Bhutanatha Temple overlooking the tank

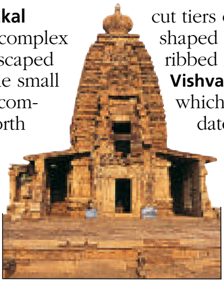
Pattadakal ㉒

The sacred complex at Pattadakal is picturesquely situated on the banks of the Malprabha river. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, its superb 8th-century temples are a fitting climax to the artistic achievements of the Chalukya kings, as seen in neighbouring Badami *(see pp536–7)* and Aihole *(see pp540–41)*. While these towns were important ancient settlements, Pattadakal, with only a small resident population, was mainly used for royal festivities and coronation ceremonies.

Shiva appearing out of the fiery linga, Virupaksha Temple

Exploring Pattadakal

The main temple complex is situated in landscaped gardens next to the small village. Built in a combination of the North Indian and South Indian temple styles *(see p20)*, these striking structures reveal a great deal about the evolution of temple architecture in South India.



The modest Galaganatha Temple, built of sandstone

North Indian-style Temples

Characterized by their curved towers *(shikharas)* over the inner sanctum, North Indian-style temples are exemplified in the **Kadasiddeshvara** and **Jambulinga Temples**, which are situated near the entrance. These are unassuming sandstone structures with damaged wall sculptures and curving tiered towers. The larger but incomplete **Galaganatha Temple** nearby has a well-preserved tower with sharply cut tiers of horseshoe-shaped motifs and a ribbed finial. The **Kashi Vishvanatha Temple**, which lies to the west, dates from the mid-8th century and further illustrates the developments in the North Indian temple style. Its faceted tower is entirely covered with a mesh design of interlocking horseshoe-arched motifs. The columns inside the small vestibule preceding the sanctum are carved with a variety of mythological scenes.

South Indian-style Temples

South Indian temple towers *(vimanas)* rise in a stepped pyramidal formation, as in the **Sangameshvara Temple**, the earliest in the complex. It was erected by the Chalukya king, Vijayaditya, who died in AD 733 before the structure was completed. Its multistoreyed tower is capped with a square domed roof. The incomplete hall in front has been restored.

The largest temples are the twin **Virupaksha** and **Mallikarjuna Temples** to the south. Both are dedicated to Shiva and were constructed in AD 745 by two sister queens of the powerful Chalukya king, Vikramaditya II, to commemorate his victory over the Pallava rulers of Tamil Nadu. These temples represent the climax of early Chalukya architecture and are said to be based on the Kailasanatha Temple in Kanchipuram *(see p582)*. They also served as the inspiration for the colossal Kailasanatha monolith at Ellora *(see pp476–8)*.

Today, the Virupaksha Temple is the only functioning shrine in this complex. In

View of the twin Virupaksha and Mallikarjuna Temples, Pattadakal

Nataraja, ceiling panel from the Papanatha Temple

front is a Nandi pavilion with a magnificently carved bull covered by a cloth. The temple itself consists of a spacious, columned hall with triple porches leading to the linga sanctum, surrounded by a passageway. The ornately carved pillars and ceilings portray mythological and religious stories. The finest reliefs are on either side of the east porch and include one of Shiva as *lingodbhavamurti*, appearing out of a fiery linga, and a depiction of Vishnu as Trivikrama, traversing the Universe in three steps.

The Mallikarjuna Temple, though identical, is smaller and more compact. The carvings on the columns of the interior hall show scenes from the *Panchatantra*, a collection of fables with bird and animal heroes. The walls surrounding the temple, and the Nandi pavilion in front of it, are incomplete.

A path from the Virupaksha Temple gateway along the river leads to the **Papanatha Temple**. This early 8th-century temple was extended several times, as can be seen in the unusual arrangement of double halls leading to the sanctuary, and in the later addition of passageway walls with porches on three sides. The interesting exterior combines South Indian-style pilastered wall niches with North Indian-style mesh patterns and curvilinear towers. Battle scenes from the *Ramayana (see p27)*, carved on the east wall, conclude with Rama's coronation, shown on the column of the main porch. Both the halls have central aisles, with pot and foliage motifs carved on the capitals. Ornate brackets and beams support ceiling panels, the finest of which show a coiled *naga* (snake) deity and a Dancing Shiva (Nataraja), in the inner hall.

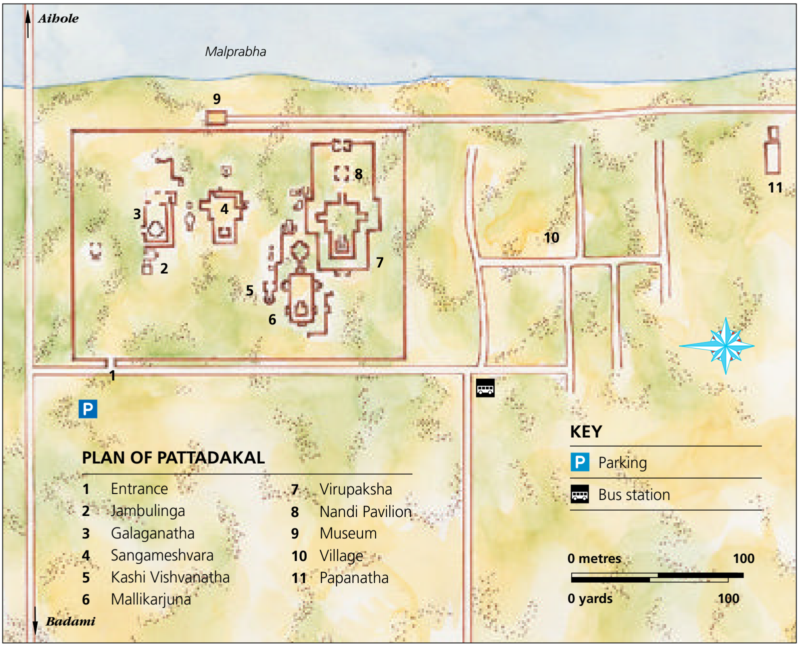
VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Bagalkot district. 22 km (14 miles) NE of Badami. 🚉 *Badami, 14 km (9 miles) SW of town centre.* 🚌 🎭 *Pattadakal Dance Festival (Jan).*

Jain Temple

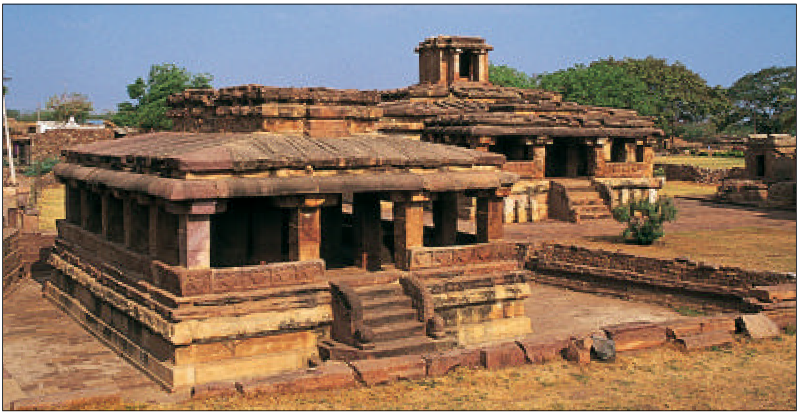
To the west of the village, is a 9th-century Jain Temple built by the Rashtrakuta rulers, who succeeded the Chalukyas in the middle of the 8th century. A spacious open porch with peripheral lathe-turned columns is overhung with angled eaves. Some remarkable carvings of life-size elephant torsos are placed beside the doorway that leads into the inner hall.

Battle between Arjuna and Shiva, Virupaksha Temple



PLAN OF PATTADAKAL

1	Entrance
2	Jambulinga
3	Galaganatha
4	Sangameshvara
5	Kashi Vishvanatha
6	Mallikarjuna
7	Virupaksha
8	Nandi Pavilion
9	Museum
10	Village
11	Papanatha



A view of the Gaudar Gudi with the Ladkhan Temple behind it, Aihole

Aihole ㉓

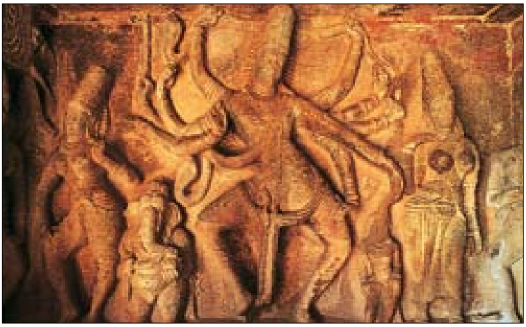
Bagalkote district. 44 km (27 miles) NE of Badami. 🚉 *Badami, 44 km (27 miles) SW of town, then bus or taxi.* 🚌 🎉 *Ramalinga Temple Chariot Festival (Feb/Mar).*

Time seems to have stood still in this small, dusty town, situated on the Malprabha river, about 17 km (11 miles) downstream from Pattadakal *(see pp538–9)*. Fortifications encircle much of the town. Within are ancient sandstone temples of varying types, some of which were used as dwellings and are named after their former inhabitants. The temples are associated with both the early and later Chalukya rulers of Badami *(see pp536–7)*, and date from the 6th–11th centuries.

Most visitors begin their tour of Aihole at the **Durga Temple**. Nearby is a small complex with the **Ladkhan Temple**. This building is recognizable by the tiers of sloping slabs that roof the spacious hall as well as the adjoining entrance porch. River goddesses and amorous couples are carved on the columns of the porch, while images of deities can be seen on the side walls of a small chamber at the rooftop level. The adjacent **Gaudar Gudi** comprises a small sanctuary set within an open *mandapa*, with balcony seating on four sides. The ruined Chakra Gudi is near the stepped tank. The **Kunti Group**, a quartet of temples conceived as open columned halls with interior sanctuaries, lies to the south. The temple to the southeast, probably the first to be built, has superbly carved ceiling panels portraying the Hindu Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. A similar trio of ceiling panels can be seen in the Hucchapayya Math, lying a short distance beyond.

A stepped path leads to the top of the hill southeast of the town, passing by a two-storeyed Buddhist temple. At the summit of the hill stands the serene **Meguti Temple** built in AD 634, the earliest dated structural monument in Karnataka. The temple's clearly articulated basement, plastered walls and eaves show the South Indian style of temple architecture *(see p20)* in its earliest phase. An impressive seated Jain figure is installed in the sanctuary. Prehistoric megalithic tombs are located to the rear of the temple. The road, going downhill, follows the curving fortifications and passes the Jyotirlinga Group, until it ends at the Durga Temple. To the north of the Durga Temple is the **Chikki Gudi**, with exquisitely carved columns, beams and ceiling panels. A path to the right, leads to the small **Hucchimalli Gudi**, with a North Indian style tower, and an unusual icon of Karttikeya, Shiva's son, carved on the ceiling of the front porch.

Nearby lies the rock-cut **Ravala Phadi Cave**, dating to the late 6th century. Its interior is enhanced with splendid carvings of Hindu divinities. These include a Dancing Shiva in a subshrine; Ardhanarishvara, Harihara and Shiva with Ganga, on the walls of the main hall; and Varaha and Durga in the antechamber preceding the small linga sanctuary. Tiny shrines and a fluted column stand in front.



The exuberant Dancing Shiva relief in Ravala Phadi Cave

Aihole: Durga Temple

Medallion on porch pillar

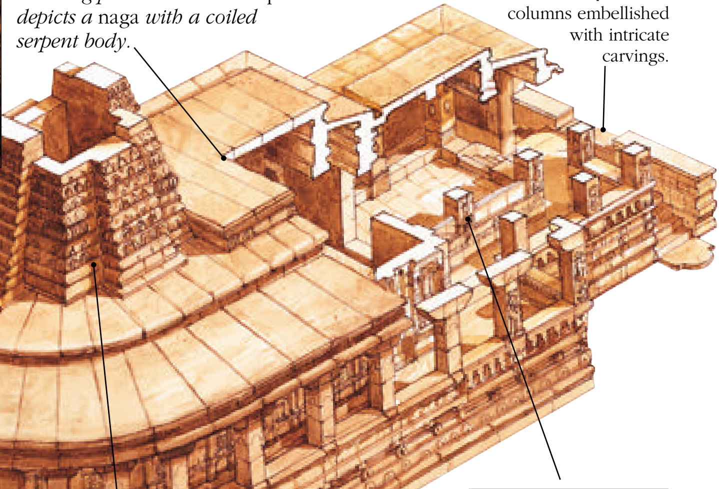
The largest and finest monument at Aihole, the Durga Temple is also the most unusual because of its apsidal sanctuary surrounded by an open colonnade. The temple is elevated on a lofty plinth, with steps at one end leading to a porch with elaborate carvings of sensuous couples and guardians on its columns. Other sculptural masterpieces, of Shiva with Nandi, Narasimha, Vishnu with Garuda, Durga and Harihara, are placed in the niches lining the colonnade. The interior of the hall is plain by contrast and the circular plinth within the sanctuary empty. The temple's name is a misnomer, as the identity of the image that was once worshipped here remains unknown.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

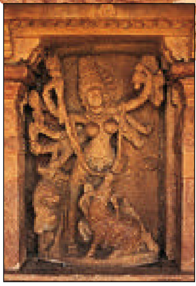
N of Archaeological Museum. ○ *daily.* ▨ *covers all main temples.*

A view of the semi-circular sanctuary of the Durga Temple

Naga Ceiling
A ceiling panel in the mandapa *depicts a* naga *with a coiled serpent body.*


The entrance porch has columns embellished with intricate carvings.

The capstone *(amalaka)*, a ribbed disc, has fallen down from the tower.


Durga
This niche shows a multi-armed Durga slaying the buffalo demon.

Shikhara
Little remains of the tower that once rose above the inner sanctum.

Column Carving
This depiction of an amorous couple, carved on one of the columns in the porch, is a masterpiece of Chalukyan art.

Bijapur ㉔

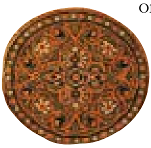
Bijapur district. 570 km (354 miles) NW of Bangalore. 👥 *246,000.* 🚉 🚌 ℹ *Karnataka Tourism, Station Rd, (08352) 250 359.* 🎭 *Bijapur Music Festival (Jan), Asar Mahal Urs Festival (Sep).*

After the fall of the Bahmanis *(see p544)*, the Adil Shahi sultans emerged as the principal rulers of the Deccan in the 16th and 17th centuries. Their capital, the fortified city of Bijapur, was protected by ramparts with prominent bastions; many of the original cannons are still in place. The Malik-i-Maidan ("Lord of the Plain"), reputedly the largest cannon of the period in India, still guards the western entrance. Within the fort's walls are splendid mosques, palaces and tombs built by a succession of enlightened rulers.

The arcaded prayer hall of the Jami Masjid

The Citadel

The Citadel, in the heart of the city, is defined by its own fortified walls and surrounded by a wide moat. The south gate, the only one surviving, leads into what was once the palace complex. This ceremonial centre of Bijapur, surrounded by arcades, is known as the **Quadrangle**, and is today occupied by municipal offices. To its northwest stands the **Sat Manzil**, the seven-storeyed pleasure palace from the top of which the whole city could once be seen. Of this, only five storeys now remain. It overlooks an exquisitely ornamented miniature pavilion called the **Jal Mandir**. A short distance to the north are the **Gagan Mahal**, the audience hall of Ali Adil Shah I, with an arched façade facing an open space, and the **Anand Mahal**, or the "Palace of Joy", where the ladies of the seraglio lived. Other fine structures include the **Mecca Masjid**, a charming little mosque to the east of the Citadel, and **Karimuddin's Mosque** near the south gate, built with temple materials pillaged in 1310 by Alauddin Khilji *(see p48).*



Medallion at Jami Masjid

Outside the Citadel

The walled city, outside the Citadel, is scattered with monuments built by the Adil Shahi sultans. To the east of the Citadel is the double-storeyed **Asar Mahal**, built in 1646 as the hall of justice, and later converted into a sacred reliquary to house two hairs of the Prophet. Chambers on the upper level are decorated with murals depicting floral themes and courtly scenes with European-style figures. A short distance away is the elegant **Mihtar Mahal**, belonging to the period of Ibrahim II (1580–1626) and entered through a triple-storeyed gateway. Balconies projecting over the street are supported on angled struts carved as if they were made of wood. The gateway leads to a small mosque.

The grandly conceived **Jami Masjid**, to the southeast, was begun by Ali Adil Shah I in 1576, but never finished. The marble floor of the capacious prayer hall has been divided into some 2,250 rectangular bays to resemble prayer mats. Even today, the mosque attracts more than 2,000 worshippers during Friday prayers. To the north and west are more tombs and mosques, including the Taj Baoli, a large square tank surrounded by steps.

Ibrahim Rauza, the beautifully proportioned tomb of Ibrahim II

Ibrahim Rauza

🕐 *daily.* 🖐 📷 *extra charges.*

This exquisite mausoleum, often described as the finest Islamic building in the Deccan, was built by Ibrahim II for his wife. In fact, he predeceased her and is buried here too. The funerary complex consists of a tomb and a mosque, raised on a plinth in the middle of a formal garden. A huge tank nearby is named after his wife, Taj Sultana. The walls of the tomb, as seen within an arcaded verandah, are embellished with superb calligraphic and geometric designs. The tomb chamber is roofed by a flat vault with curving sides.

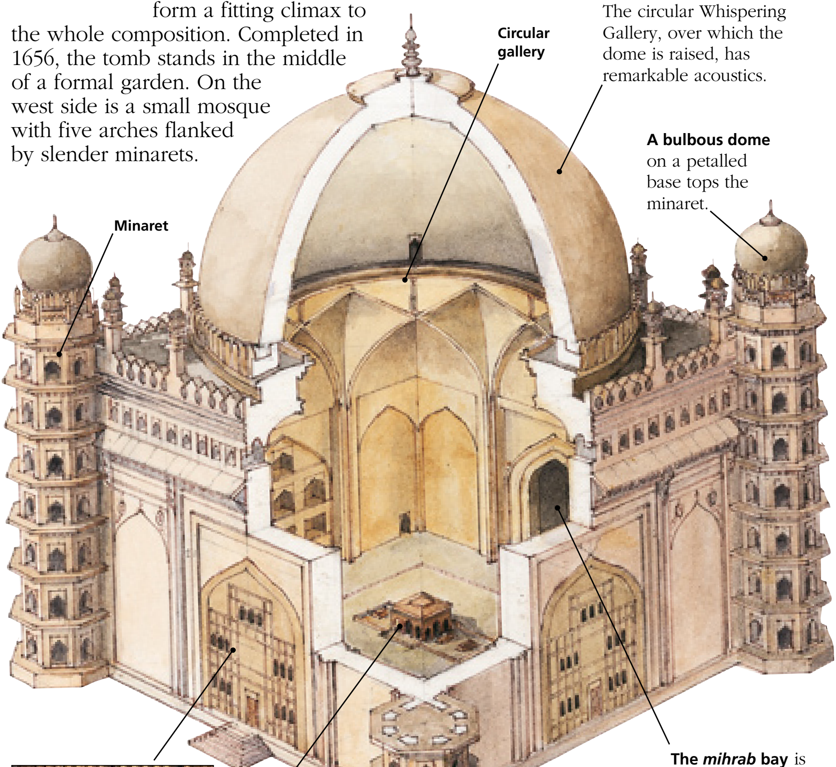
Bijapur: Gol Gumbad

Detail of a medallion

Bijapur's most celebrated building, the monumental tomb of Muhammad Adil Shah (1627–56), second son and successor of Ibrahim II, is commonly known as the "Round Dome", or Gol Gumbad. The slightly bulbous dome, the largest in the world after St Peter's in Rome, rises on a base of petals to form a fitting climax to the whole composition. Completed in 1656, the tomb stands in the middle of a formal garden. On the west side is a small mosque with five arches flanked by slender minarets.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Mahatma Gandhi Rd. ***Tel*** *(08352) 250 728* ○ *daily.* ▨ *free on Fri. Autos & cycles available.*



Circular gallery

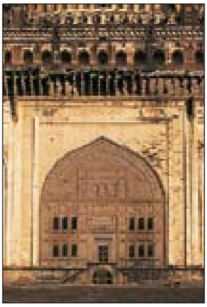
The dome is nearly 44 m (133 ft) in diameter. It is carried on eight overlapping arches with intervening pendentives. The circular Whispering Gallery, over which the dome is raised, has remarkable acoustics.

A bulbous dome on a petalled base tops the minaret.

Minaret

The *mihrab* bay is within a part-octagonal projection, to the west. The walls are overhung by richly carved stone brackets with tiers of lotus buds.

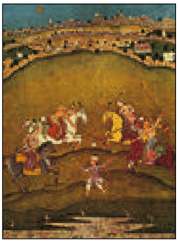
Tomb of Muhammad Adil Shah.



Entrance Arch
The entrance façade has a wide, lofty arch in the centre, pierced with small windows on either side.

DECCANI PAINTING

The Muslim rulers of the Deccan, especially of Golconda *(see pp666–7)* and Bijapur, during the 14th and 15th centuries, encouraged art and established a Deccani School of Painting. This was influenced first by direct contact with Central Asia and Persia, and later by the Mughals. At the court of Bijapur, elements of European Renaissance and Persian art were assimilated into the classical Indian tradition, to create a distinctive Deccani style.



***Chand Bibi Playing Polo,* a Deccani painting**

The vaulted hall of the Jami Masjid at Gulbarga

Gulbarga ㉕

Gulbarga district. 160 km (99 miles) NE of Bijapur. 👥 *428,000.* 🚆 🚌 ℹ *Gulbarga Tourist Office, (08472) 240 947.* 🎉 *Urs (Mar).*

This small provincial town contains some of the earliest examples of Islamic architecture in Karnataka. These date to the 14th and 15th centuries, when Gulbarga flourished as the capital of the Bahmani sultans *(see p49)*, the first of the great Muslim kingdoms to dominate the Deccan.

The **Dargah of Gesu Daraz** (d.1422), to the northeast of the present town, is one of South India's holiest Muslim shrines. Khwaja Gesu Daraz, or Bande Nawaz as he was affectionately known, was a Sufi mystic from the Chishti sect *(see p376)*. He fled from North India and sought refuge here at the court of Firuz Shah Bahmani, a pious and enlightened ruler. His simple tomb stands in the middle of a large, sprawling complex comprising a group of lesser tombs, mosques and *madrasas,* and is a major pilgrimage centre. The Dargah of Shah Kamal Mujarrad, another saint who lived in Gulbarga, lies further south.

A complex of seven royal tombs, known as the **Haft Gumbad**, lies to the west of the *dargah*. Firuz Shah Bahmani, who also died in 1422, is buried here in the largest and most elaborate of all the mausoleums. Immediately west of the city are the desolate ruins of the forbidding fort, almost circular and protected by a wide moat. Little of the royal centre remains intact today. Near the entrance gateway is the Bala Hisar, a solid keep dating from the 17th century, when the Adil Shahis *(see pp542–3)* occupied the city. The most interesting structure, however, is the large **Jami Masjid** nearby. Built in 1367, to commemorate Gulbarga's status as the capital, this is one of the earliest mosques in South India, and the only one without an open courtyard. To its rear is the 14th-century Bazaar Street, lined with small chambers now converted into dwellings. This leads to a series of gateways shielded by walls that protrude outwards from the fort walls. To the west of the fort are the derelict tombs of the early Bahmani sultans.

Another 14th-century monument is the **Shah Bazaar Mosque**, to the north of the fort. Its domed entrance chamber leads into a courtyard with a prayer hall beyond. A street from here proceeds westwards to an arcaded portal flanked by lofty minarets. Behind this portal lies the Dargah of Sheikh Sirajuddin Junaydi, a simple tomb with arcaded recesses and a flattish dome.

Devotees at the gateway to the Dargah of Gesu Daraz, Gulbarga

Environs

The picturesque ruins of **Firuzabad**, the palace city founded in 1400 by Firuz Shah Bahmani on the east bank of the Bhima river, are located 28 km (17 miles) south of Gulbarga. The massive stone walls with quadrangular bastions and arched gateways define an approximately square zone, almost 1,000 m (3,281 ft) wide. The best preserved structures are the Jami Masjid and a two-storeyed audience hall. Among the remains are the royal baths *(hamams)*, with pyramidal vaults and fluted domes, said to be the oldest in the Deccan.

Bidar ㉖

Bidar district. 120 km (75 miles) NE of Gulbarga. 🚌 *Autos & cycles available.*

Bidar became the Bahmani capital in 1424, when Firuz Shah's brother and successor, Ahmad Shah, moved his court here. With the collapse of the Bahmani dynasty at the end of the 15th century, control of the region passed into the hands of the Baridis.

Bidar's **Fort**, built in 1428 by Ahmed Shah Bahmani, occupies a promontory that is defended by double rings of walls and a moat partly carved out of the bedrock. A trio of arched gates, one with polychrome tilework, another with

The walled road leading to the entrance gateway of Bidar's fort

a prominent dome, leads into what was once the royal enclave. To the left is the Rangin Mahal, an exquisite palace built by Ali Shah Barid in the 16th century. The hall, with its original wooden columns displaying ornate brackets and beams, and the rear chamber adorned with magnificent tile mosaics and inlaid mother-of-pearl decoration, are especially striking. Nearby is the unusual Solah Khamba Mosque, with massive circular columns, built by the Tughluqs *(see p48)* in 1327. In front is the Lal Bagh, a walled garden with a central lobe-fringed pool. A short distance to the south is the ruined Diwan-i-Am, the Public Audience Hall, and the Takht Mahal, a monumental portal with traces of hexagonal tiles decorated with tiger and sun emblems in the spandrels.

The old walled town sprawls beneath the ramparts of the fort. On one side of the main north-south street is the **Takhti-i-Kirmani**, a 15th-century gateway embellished with bands of foliate and arabesque designs. Further south is the magnificent late 15th-century **Madrasa of Mahmud Gawan**, named after the erudite prime minister who was the virtual ruler of the Bahmani kingdom. This used to be a famous theological college, and at one time boasted a huge library, well-stocked with scholarly manuscripts. A superb example of Central Asian-style architecture, it has four arched portals that stand against a background of domes facing a central court. A pair of minarets flanks its façade. Tile mosaics on the exterior still survive, including a finely worked calligraphic band in rich blue and white. Still further south, the **Chaubara** marks the intersection of the two principal streets running through Bidar.

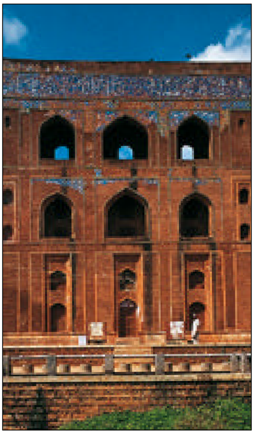
Tile mosaic at Bidar's madrasa

The **Mausolea of the Baridi rulers** lie west of Bidar. The largest is the Tomb of Ali Shah Barid (1577). This lofty, domed chamber, open on four sides, stands in the middle of a symmetrical four-square garden. Blank panels above the arches once contained tile mosaic, examples of which are preserved inside. The black polished basalt sarcophagus is still *in situ*.

Bidar is also known for a special type of encrusted metalware, often mistaken for damascening, known as *bidri* *(see p665)*. Introduced in the mid-17th century by artisans from Iran, the craft flourished under court patronage. The style, characterized by intricate floral and geometric designs, inlaid in gold, silver or brass onto a matt black surface, was used to embellish various objects, including platters, boxes, *huqqa* bases and trays. Today, the finest pieces are housed in museums, and only a handful of artisan families still practise this craft in the town of its origin.

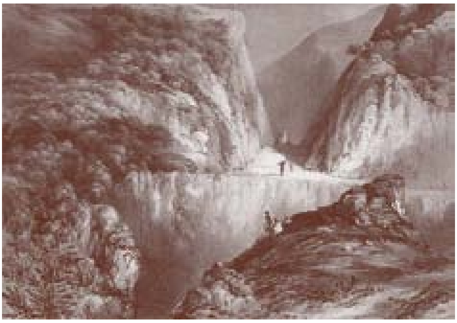
Environs

The Bahmani necropolis stands in the open countryside near **Ashtur**, a small village 3 km (2 miles) northeast of Bidar. The oldest and grandest of the tombs is the early 15th-century Tomb of Ahmad Shah. Splendid murals embellish the interior walls as well as the huge dome. The adjacent tomb of Alauddin Ahmad II, his successor, has coloured tile mosaics. Just outside is the Chaukhandi, the modest tomb of the saint Khalil Allah (d.1460), which has superb calligraphic panels over the doorways.



Façade of the Madrasa of Mahmud Gawan in Bidar

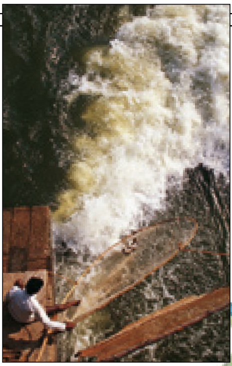
SOUTH INDIA



INTRODUCING SOUTH INDIA 548–555
CHENNAI 556–575
TAMIL NADU 576–615
ANDAMAN ISLANDS 616–623
KERALA 624–657
ANDHRA PRADESH 658–683

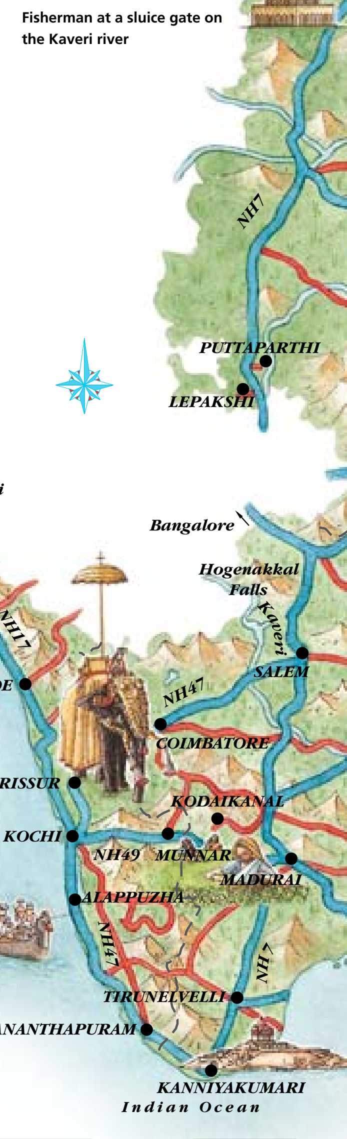
Introducing South India

South of the Vindhya range, India's Dravidian heartland has all that a visitor could look for. Dramatic coastlines, both on the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal, meet at Kanniyakumari on the Indian Ocean. Isolated beaches, dense forests and game reserves are among its natural wonders. Tamil Nadu has some of India's most magnificent ancient temples, still active centres of religious practice. A different culture prevails in Pondicherry, which retains a strong French influence. Kerala is rich in beautiful scenery as well as in cultural heritage, while Andhra Pradesh has some of the region's most fascinating historic sites.

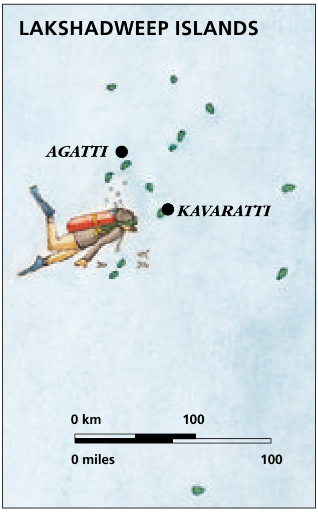


Fisherman at a sluice gate on the Kaveri river

A class in progress in a traditional Vedic school, Tamil Nadu

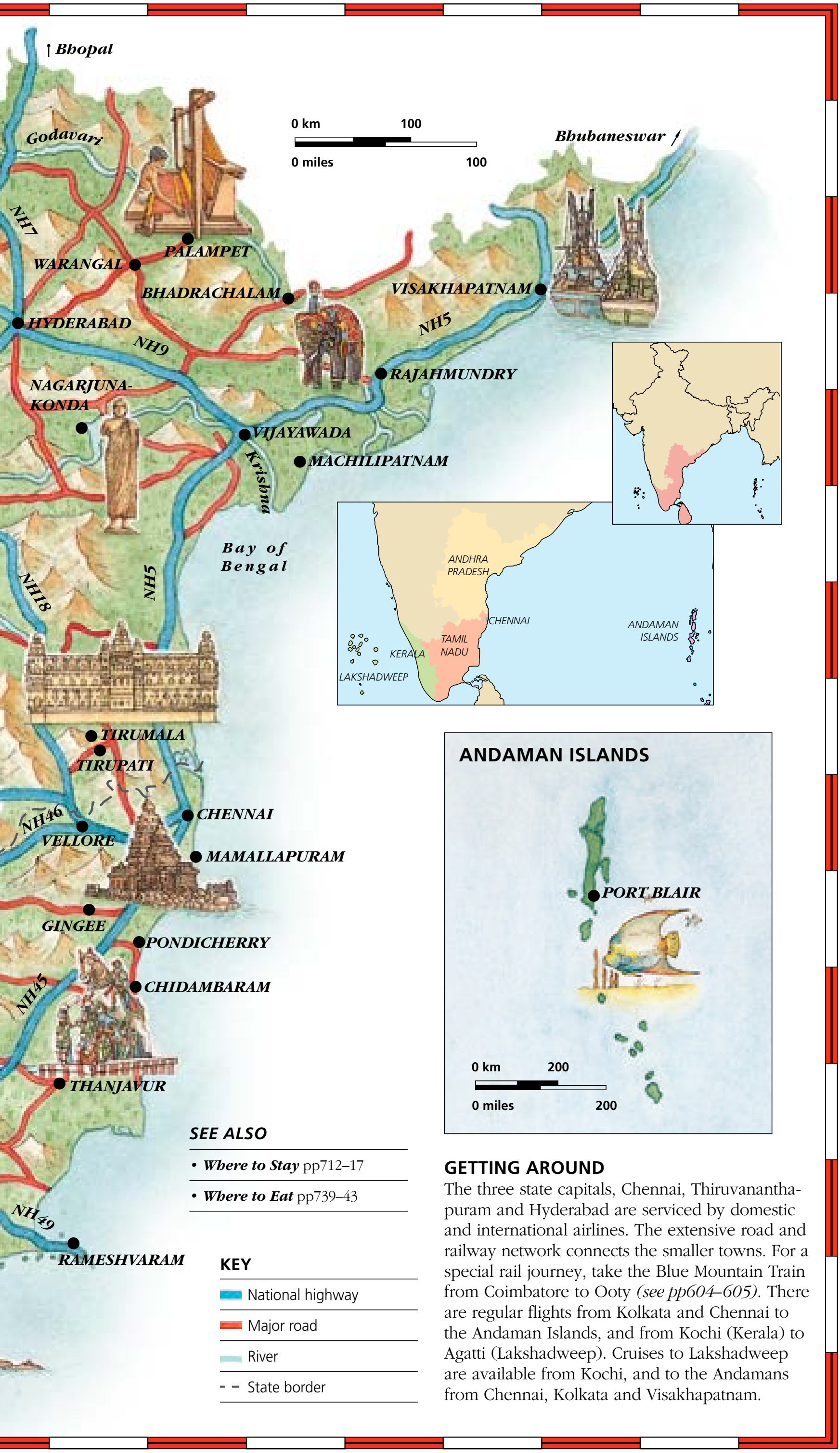


Mumbai
NH7
PUTTAPARTHI
LEPAKSHI
Panaji
Bangalore
Hogenakkal Falls
Kaveri
KANNUR
NH17
SALEM
KOZHIKODE
NH47
COIMBATORE
THRISSUR
KODAIKANAL
Arabian Sea
KOCHI
NH49
MUNNAR
MADURAI
ALAPPUZHA
NH47
NH7
TIRUNELVELLI
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
KANNIYAKUMARI
Indian Ocean



LAKSHADWEEP ISLANDS
AGATTI
KAVARATTI
0 km
100
0 miles
100

◁ The spectacular Hogenakkal Falls on the Kaveri river *(see p600)*


Bhopal
0 km 100
0 miles 100
Bhubaneswar
Godavari
NH7
WARANGAL
PALAMPET
BHADRACHALAM
VISAKHAPATNAM
NH5
HYDERABAD
NH9
RAJAHMUNDRY
NAGARJUNA-KONDA
VIJAYAWADA
MACHILIPATNAM
Krishna
Bay of Bengal
NH18
NH5
ANDHRA PRADESH
CHENNAI
ANDAMAN ISLANDS
TAMIL NADU
KERALA
LAKSHADWEEP
TIRUMALA
TIRUPATI
NH46
CHENNAI
VELLORE
MAMALLAPURAM
GINGEE
PONDICHERRY
NH45
CHIDAMBARAM
THANJAVUR
NH49
RAMESHVARAM
ANDAMAN ISLANDS
PORT BLAIR
0 km 200
0 miles 200

SEE ALSO

- ***Where to Stay*** pp712–17
- ***Where to Eat*** pp739–43

KEY

- 🟦 National highway
- 🟥 Major road
- 🟦 River
- - - State border

GETTING AROUND

The three state capitals, Chennai, Thiruvananthapuram and Hyderabad are serviced by domestic and international airlines. The extensive road and railway network connects the smaller towns. For a special rail journey, take the Blue Mountain Train from Coimbatore to Ooty *(see pp604–605)*. There are regular flights from Kolkata and Chennai to the Andaman Islands, and from Kochi (Kerala) to Agatti (Lakshadweep). Cruises to Lakshadweep are available from Kochi, and to the Andamans from Chennai, Kolkata and Visakhapatnam.

For additional map symbols *see back flap*

A PORTRAIT OF SOUTH INDIA

The term "South India", though it conveys a sense of geographical unity, also encompasses a multitude of differences. While the three states – Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh – share, to some extent, an ancient heritage, they speak different languages, and each has its distinct artistic, cultural and political tradition.

Wooden effigy, Thiruvananthapuram

A popular view holds that while the history of North India is one of wars and invasions, the south remained cocooned in peaceful stagnation. In actual fact, the three states witnessed bloody conflicts between Jainism and Buddhism on the one hand, and Brahminical Hinduism on the other. They saw the rise and fall of powerful kingdoms, who fought many wars to establish their dominance. In the beginning of the colonial period, South India was also a battleground between the Europeans and the regional kingdoms. All these upheavals have left their mark on the region.

Tamil Nadu, the heartland of Dravidian India has, for over three decades, been ruled by two regional parties. Though arch-rivals, they share a common platform, based on a strong advocacy of Tamil language and culture. Tamil is the oldest surviving Dravidian language, with a literature that goes back to AD 300. This period, known as the Sangam era, derives its name from the Tamil Sangams, gatherings of poets and writers, which produced countless poems, remarkably secular in nature, of which over 2,000 have survived. Another enduring expression of Tamil culture is visible in Tamil Nadu's Hindu temples – it has no less than 30,000 of them.

A more modern face of Tamil Nadu can be seen in the state capital, Chennai, a vibrant commercial and

A 16th-century Catholic church, overlooking a little fishing village at Kanniyakumari

A portrait of film star-turned-politician Jayalalitha

political centre that still retains its traditional values. Here, classical Carnatic music concerts draw as large and enthusiastic crowds as raucous political rallies. Many coastal areas in Tamil Nadu were devastated by the December 2004 tsunami, which took a toll of over 10,000 lives. Kerala and Andhra Pradesh were also affected, though to a much lesser extent.

A truck overloaded with hay

In Kerala, separated from Tamil Nadu by the magnificent forested hills of the Western Ghats, the main attraction is not temples (though it has those too), but natural beauty. It is easy to understand why this narrow strip of land between the Arabian Sea and the Western Ghats, with its verdant landscape of palm trees, paddy fields and coffee plantations, criss-crossed by enchanting waterways, has been dubbed "God's own country".

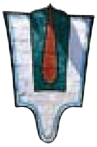
Modern-day Kerala, with a strong leftist political tradition, boasts of development indices that are exceptional among Indian states – the country's highest literacy rate (the language spoken here is Malayalam), a low population growth rate, the lowest infant mortality rate, and a near-perfect record in communal harmony. Culturally, Kerala boasts spectacular dance forms such as Kathakali *(see p657)*, and the martial *kalaripayattu (see p626)*. Today, its renowned Ayurvedic health resorts *(see p629)* are also a major draw for international travellers.

Telugu-speaking Andhra Pradesh is South India's largest state, with its capital, Hyderabad, located in the heart of the Deccan Plateau. This city was once the seat of the powerful Nizams *(see p660)* whose wealth was legendary. Their legacy has given Hyderabad a unique flavour, rich in manifestations of an Islamic culture – in its architecture and cuisine, and in the widespread use of Urdu.

Andhra Pradesh shares with Tamil Nadu a penchant for film stars-turned-politicians. For many years it was ruled by Telugu cinema's most loved actor, NT Rama Rao, who specialized in playing mythological heroes. His son-in-law, Chandrababu Naidu, as chief minister, chose a more down-to-earth way of winning popular support, with his schemes to modernize the state. As a result, Hyderabad now vies with Bangalore for the title of India's information technology capital.

Tamil Brahmin boys performing a religious ritual

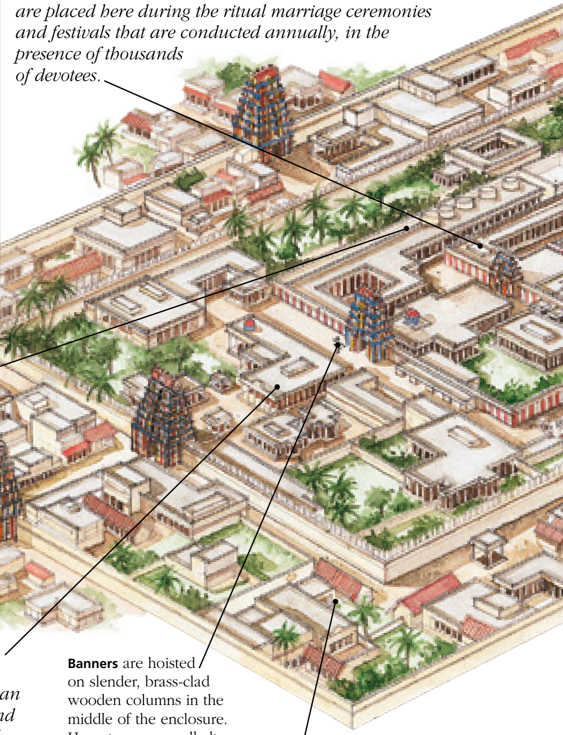
Temple Towns



Religious symbol

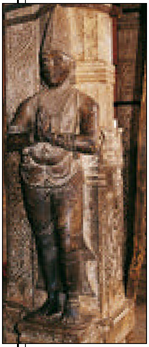
Srirangam *(see p601)* is typical of many towns in South India, especially in Tamil Nadu, that are dominated by sanctuaries dedicated to Hindu deities who protect the city and its population. Conceived as a vast religious complex, the town is enclosed by high fortress-like walls, and entered through towering gateways *(gopuras)*. The temple itself consists of multiple walled enclosures, often in concentric arrangements, surrounded by streets that echo the temple's layout. Though Srirangam is the largest and most perfect in layout, other such towns include Chidambaram *(see p590)* and Madurai *(see pp608–11)*.

Puja items being sold outside the temple enclosure



Kalyana Mandapas *(marriage halls) have raised platforms in the middle. Portable images of the deities are placed here during the ritual marriage ceremonies and festivals that are conducted annually, in the presence of thousands of devotees.*

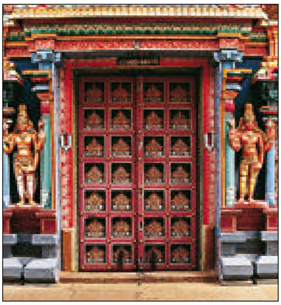
Kitchens produce food for priests and thousands of pilgrims during festivals that take place in the complex. Nearby are stores and granaries.



Subsidiary shrines *of other deities, such as Garuda and Hanuman in Vishnu temples, and Ganesha, Nandi and Subrahmanya or Murugan in Shiva temples, are also venerated within the complex.*

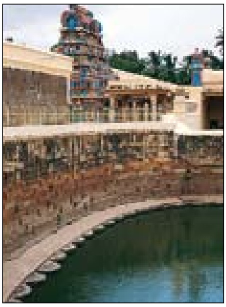
Banners are hoisted on slender, brass-clad wooden columns in the middle of the enclosure. Here, too, are small altars.

The outer enclosures *of temple complexes are packed with houses to accommodate the priestly community, which presides over the religious life of temple towns.*

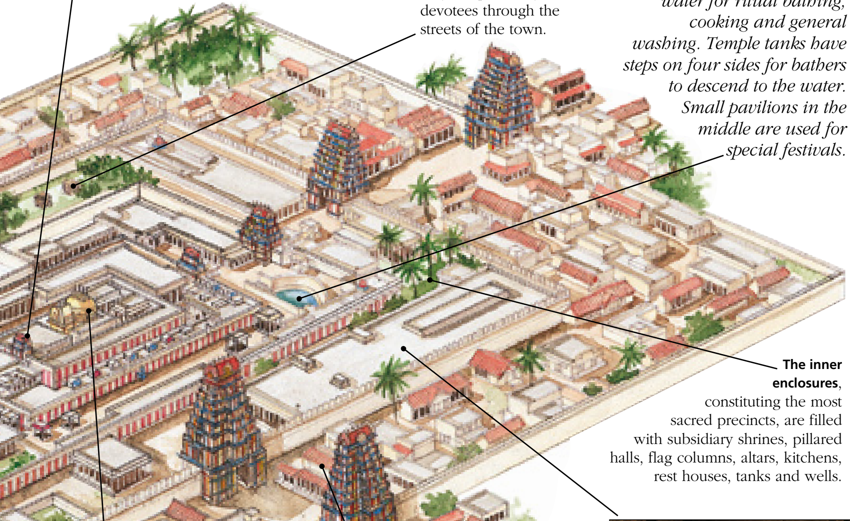


The main sanctum, *where the principal deity is enshrined, forms the nucleus of the whole complex. This is the* garbhagriha*, or womb chamber. The main doorway into the sanctuary is opened only during prayer time, to allow worshippers to make offerings to the deity within.*

Wooden chariots covered with carved panels are parked outside the main gates. During festivals they are pulled by devotees through the streets of the town.

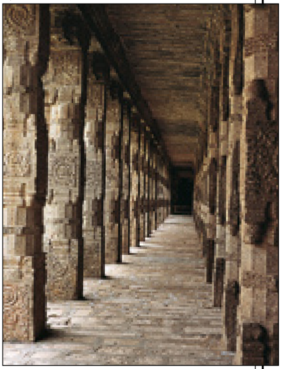


Tanks and wells *provide water for ritual bathing, cooking and general washing. Temple tanks have steps on four sides for bathers to descend to the water. Small pavilions in the middle are used for special festivals.*



The inner enclosures, constituting the most sacred precincts, are filled with subsidiary shrines, pillared halls, flag columns, altars, kitchens, rest houses, tanks and wells.

Axial *mandapas* and corridors direct worshippers from the outer *gopuras* towards the main sanctuary. Sculptures on columns embellish these passageways. Bronze images are also displayed here.



Mandapas *are columned halls which sometimes take on vast proportions, especially the so-called thousand-pillared halls. These can accommodate large numbers of visitors who come to listen to sermons or to enjoy performances of classical music and dance.*

Gopuras, *or ceremonial gateways, with soaring, pyramidal towers, are set into four sides of each of the concentric sets of walls that define the sacred complex. Their hollow brick towers are covered with brightly painted plaster sculptures. Barrel-vaulted roofs at the tops of the towers are crowned by gilded pot finials, visible from all over the town.*

The Flavours of South India

Rice preparations dominate South Indian cuisine, of which the best known are *dosas* (rice pancakes served with spiced potatoes), *idli* (steamed rice dumplings), *vada* (deep-fried lentil doughnuts) and *uttapam* (a spicy pancake). All are eaten with *sambhar* (lentil broth) and chutneys made with coconut, garlic and chillies. These are "tiffin" or breakfast foods, and specialist restaurants can be found all over India and abroad. Despite the commonalities, each state's cuisine has its own flavour, dictated by regional tastes and locally grown ingredients, as is evident in Hyderabad's sophisticated Muslim cuisine.

Sprig of curry leaves

Fresh green coconuts, providing a refreshing drink on a hot day

KERALA

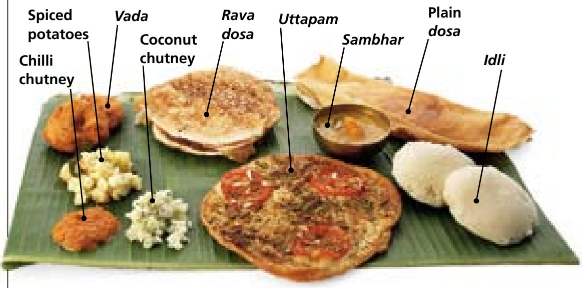
Kerala, the land of spices, particularly pepper, inspired the European race for an empire in the East. An abundance of spices, such as cloves, mace, cardamoms and cinnamon, have infused the cuisine with a range of exotic aromas. Added to this are coconuts, used in the preparation of almost all dishes.

The different communities have distinctive cuisines. The Hindus specialize in vegetarian food, while the Muslims and Christians excel in mutton and poultry dishes. Foreign influences are apparant and the classic *moilee*, a term used for fish or vegetable curries, is a corruption of the Portuguese *molho* or sauce.

The staple food is rice and the best-known dish is the *appam,* a steamed rice pancake. A typical middle-class meal comprises boiled rice accompanied by pulses, a vegetable curry, a dry vegetable, pickles, poppadams, and a meat or fish dish for non-vegetarians. The *sadya*, a festive meal eaten at Onam, is always served on a banana leaf.

TAMIL NADU

Six tastes – sweet, sour, salty, bitter, peppery and astringent – define Tamilian food. A traditional meal includes



Selection of South Indian rice preparations and other accompaniments

LOCAL DISHES AND SPECIALITIES

Coconuts

The common culinary heritage leans heavily on rice, lentils, coconut and spices. Vegetable preparations are diverse and range from the steamed or stir-fried *poriyal*, which is tempered with spices and curry leaves, to *avial* (mixed vegetables in thick coconut sauce) and *mirchi ka salan* (a curry with whole green chillies). Interestingly, the word curry is a derivative of *kari*, a spicy dish from Kerala and Tamil Nadu, while *rasam*, integral to a meal as an appetizer and digestive, was the base of the Anglo-Indian mulligatawny soup. Chicken, lamb and fish also feature on the menu, particularly the seafood curries from Kerala and Andhra Pradesh and the delicious *biryanis* and wide range of *kebabs* from Hyderabad.

Appams and stew, *a popular dish, consists of fermented rice dumplings served with a vegetable or chicken stew.*

Chinese fishing nets, an iconic sight in Fort Cochin, Kerala

all six to balance nutrition, the appetite and digestion. The special flavour of the food comes from a combination of curry leaves, ginger, coconut, garlic, coriander, asafetida, tamarind, pepper, chillies, cloves, cumin, cinnamon and cardamom.

Meals consist of cooked rice served with an array of vegetable dishes, *sambhar*, *rasam* (pepper water) and chutneys. Crisp poppadams or *appalam* (rice wafer) complete a meal. Desserts include the warm milky rice *payasam* or sweet *pongal*, also made from rice.

Non-Brahmin communities, such as the Chettiars from Chettinad, are meat eaters. Their hot and spicy cuisine has several interesting fish, mutton and chicken dishes, of which pepper chicken is considered the best.

ANDHRA PRADESH

The liberal use of red chilli and tamarind make Andhra food one of the country's spiciest. Rice and vegetables form the basis of a meal. Some common dishes include *pulihora* (a vegetable *pulao*), *pessarattu,* (a variation of the *dosa*), *dhapalam* (a vegetable curry) and *pachidi* (a curd-based relish).

View of a street vegetable market in rural Tamil Nadu

In contrast is the cuisine of Hyderabad with its distinct Muslim influences. Savoury mutton or chicken *biryanis* are accompanied by *kebabs*, lamb, chicken or vegetable curries *(salans)*, vegetables and breads. Some specialities include *pathar gosh* (lamb cooked on a stone), *haleem* (a pounded wheat and lamb dish eaten during the fasting months of Ramzan or Ramadan) and desserts such as *shahi tukra* and *kubani ka meetha*, made with dried apricots and cream.

ON THE MENU

Aadu olathiayathu Fried cubes of lamb garnished with coconut and curry leaves.

Meen varuval *Masala* fried fish from Chettinad, served with sliced onions and lime.

Sambhar A spicy lentil broth with mixed vegetables, a must for all meals.

Tahari A rice and mincemeat *pulao*, a Hyderabad special.

Tamatar pappu A spicy tomato and lentil curry.

Thengai saadham Coconut rice, seasoned with red chillies and curry leaves.

Upma A savoury semolina breakfast dish.

Bagharey baingan, *whole aubergines stuffed with spices, are Hyderabad's most famous vegetarian dish.*

Meen moilee, *a speciality of the Christian community of Kerala, is a lightly spiced coconut fish curry.*

Pasayam *is a creamy dessert made from rice and milk and garnished with cashew nuts and raisins.*

CHENNAI

Chennai, formerly known as Madras, is the state capital of Tamil Nadu and the gateway to the rich and varied culture of the South Indian peninsula. Originally a cluster of fishing hamlets along the Coromandel Coast, the city developed its cohesive shape under the British. Today, it is South India's commercial and cultural capital, and the fourth largest metropolis in India.

A modern capital, with the appearance of a gracious garden city, Chennai was once a group of villages set amidst palm-fringed paddy fields, until two English East India Company merchants, Francis Day and Andrew Cogan, established a factory-cum-trading post here. Completed on St George's Day, 23 April 1640, this fortified settlement came to be known as Fort St George. Outside its walls was George Town, the so-called "native town", whose crowded lanes, each devoted to a particular trade, serviced the British colonists. Colonial rule linked the various villages, including the settlement founded in the 16th century by the Portuguese at San Thomé, the sacred site associated with St Thomas the Apostle. Several centuries before the Europeans arrived, the great 7th-century Pallava port was at Mylapore; its Kapalesvara Temple, along with the Parthasarathi Temple at Triplicane, bear testimony to the city's antiquity.

Colonial rule marked the beginning of the city's growth as a major commercial centre. Today, most of the large business houses have their offices in George Town, while Fort St George is the power centre of the Tamil Nadu state government. Extending across 172 sq km (66 sq miles), Chennai today is a dynamic mix of the old and the new, its stately colonial structures juxtaposed with modern high-rises. Its rich cultural heritage of Tamil literature, music and dance is perpetuated in universities and performing arts centres. It is also a highly political city, as can be seen from the many grandiose memorials to politicians that line Marina Beach.

A huge hoarding depicting Jayalalitha, a Tamil Nadu political leader, looming above Marina promenade

◁ **Flower seller with fragrant garlands near the Kapalesvara Temple, Mylapore**

Exploring Chennai

A conglomeration of several overgrown villages, Chennai has no single centre, but can be divided into a numerous urban districts, connected by four main roads. George Town is to the northeast of Periyar EVR High Road (Poonamallee High Road), while Egmore, Triplicane and Mylapore are to the south. The city's main thoroughfare, Anna Salai (Mount Road), links Fort St George with Mount St Thomas, to the south. Chennai's other main roads, Rajaji Salai (North Beach Road) and Kamarajar Salai (South Beach Road), run along the seafront, along the popular Marina promenade towards Kalakshetra.

LOCATOR MAP

An early morning scene at a flower shop at Parry's Corner

SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

Historic Buildings, Areas & Neighbourhoods

Adyar ⑩
Anna Salai ⑥
Egmore ④
Fort St George ①
George Town ②
Triplicane ⑧

Churches & Holy Places

Little Mount & Mount of St Thomas ⑭
Mylapore & San Thomé ⑨
St Andrew's Kirk pp562–3 ③

Walk

A Walk along the Marina pp568–9 ⑦

Museums

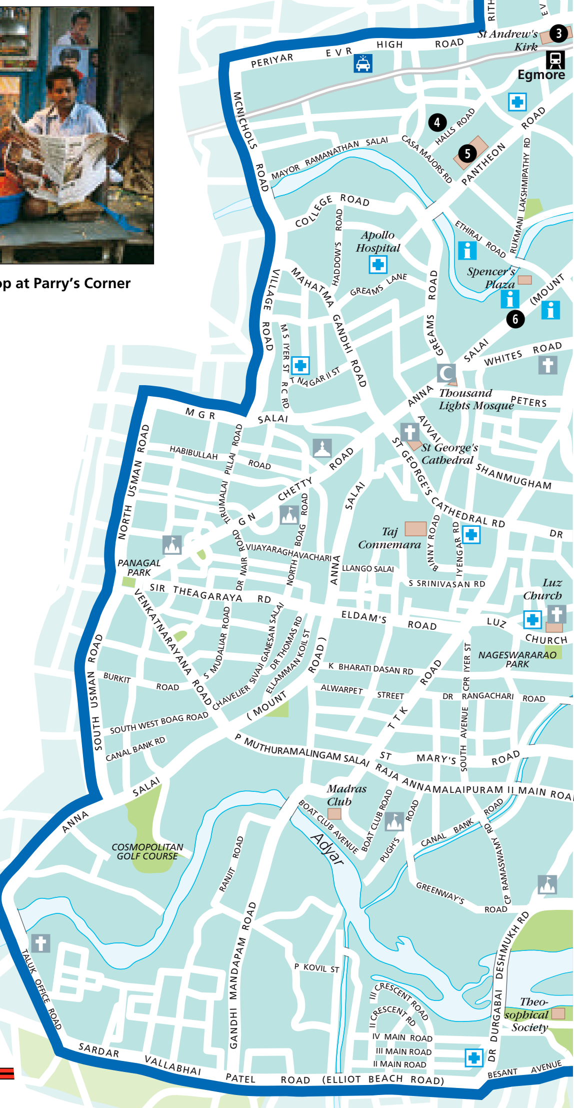
The Pantheon Complex ⑤

Parks & Gardens

Guindy National Park ⑬

Entertainment

Kalakshetra ⑪
MGR Film City ⑫


DECASTOR'S RD
PULIYANTHOPE
DMELLOW'S
ASTABUJAM
AP RD
AVADANAM P RD
HUNTERS RD
VEPERY HIGH
E V K SAMPATH
RITHERDON ROAD
PERIYAR E V R HIGH ROAD
St Andrew's Kirk
③
Egmore
MCNICHOLS ROAD
④
HALLS ROAD
⑤
CASA MAJORS RD
PANTHEON ROAD
MAYOR RAMANATHAN SALAI
COLLEGE ROAD
LAKSHMIPATHY RD
RUKMANI
ETHIRAJ ROAD
Apollo Hospital
HADDOW'S ROAD
GREAMS LANE
GREAMS ROAD
Spencer's Plaza
(MOUNT
⑥
VILLAGE ROAD
MAHATMA GANDHI ROAD
M S IYER ST
R C RD
T NAGAR II ST
ANNA SALAI
WHITES ROAD
Thousand Lights Mosque
PETERS
M G R SALAI
HABIBULLAH ROAD
PILLAI ROAD
AVVAI SHANMUGHAM
St George's Cathedral
ST GEORGE'S CATHEDRAL RD
NORTH USMAN ROAD
TIRUMALAI
G N CHETTY ROAD
BOAG ROAD
NORTH
SALAI
Taj Connemara
DR NAIR ROAD
VIJAYARAGHAVACHARI
ANNA
LLANGO SALAI
BINNY ROAD
IYENGAR RD
DR
PANAGAL PARK
SIR THEAGARAYA RD
S SRINIVASAN RD
Luz Church
VENKATNARAYANA ROAD
S MUDALIAR ROAD
SIVAJI GANESAN SALAI
DR THOMAS RD
ELLAMMAN KOIL ST
ELDAM'S ROAD
LUZ CHURCH
NAGESWARARAO PARK
K BHARATI DASAN RD
CPR IYER ST
SOUTH USMAN ROAD
BURKIT ROAD
CHAVELIER
(MOUNT ROAD)
ALWARPET STREET
T T K ROAD
DR RANGACHARI ROAD
SOUTH WEST BOAG ROAD
SOUTH AVENUE
CANAL BANK RD
P MUTHURAMALINGAM SALAI
ST MARY'S ROAD
RAJA ANNAMALAIPURAM II MAIN ROAD
ANNA SALAI
Madras Club
BOAT CLUB AVENUE
BOAT CLUB ROAD
PUGH'S ROAD
CANAL BANK ROAD
Adyar
COSMOPOLITAN GOLF COURSE
RANJIT ROAD
CP RAMASWAMY RD
GREENWAY'S ROAD
TALUK OFFICE ROAD
GANDHI MANDAPAM ROAD
P KOVIL ST
III CRESCENT ROAD
II CRESCENT RD
DESHMUKH RD
DR DURGABAI
Theosophical Society
IV MAIN ROAD
III MAIN ROAD
II MAIN ROAD
SARDAR VALLABHAI PATEL ROAD (ELLIOT BEACH ROAD)
BESANT AVENUE

For additional map symbols *see back flap*

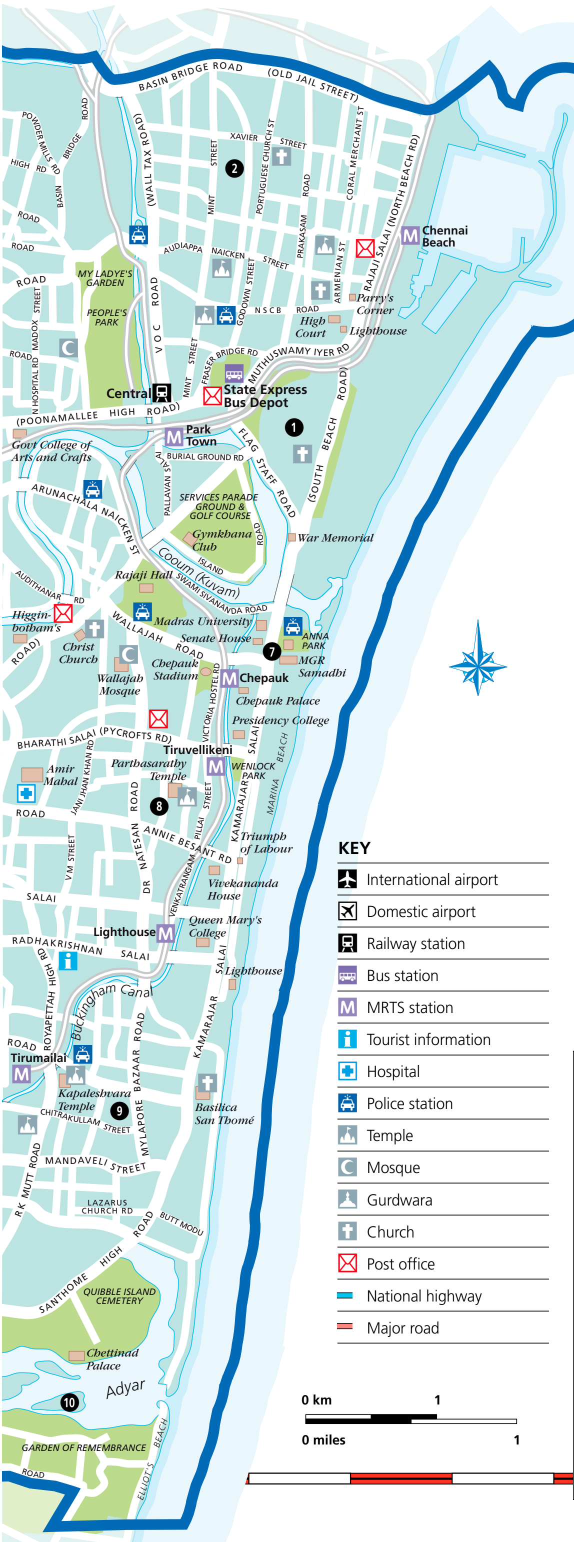
GETTING AROUND

Public buses and private cars or taxis are the most convenient means of getting around within the city. The local (above-ground) trains of Chennai's Mass Rapid Transit System (MRTS) and the suburban railway together cover large sections of the city and its outskirts. Private tour operators have organized coach tours to most sites of interest.

SEE ALSO

- ***Where to Stay*** pp712–13
- ***Where to Eat*** pp739–40

Traffic on Anna Salai, Chennai's main thoroughfare

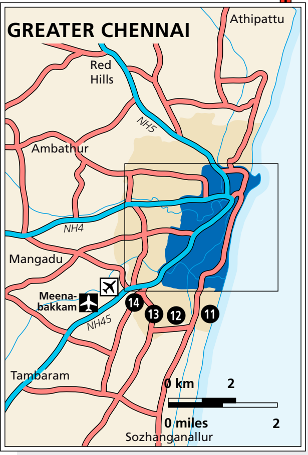

BASIN BRIDGE ROAD
(OLD JAIL STREET)
POWDER MILLS RD
BRIDGE ROAD
HIGH RD
BASIN
ROAD
(WALL TAX ROAD)
XAVIER
STREET
PORTUGUESE CHURCH ST
STREET
CORAL MERCHANT ST
MINT
ROAD
PRAKASAM
RAJAJI SALAI (NORTH BEACH RD)
Chennai Beach
AUDIAPPA
NAICKEN
STREET
ARMENIAN ST
Parry's Corner
MY LADYE'S GARDEN
PEOPLE'S PARK
ROAD
STREET
MADOX
V O C
ROAD
GODOWN STREET
N S C B
ROAD
High Court
Lighthouse
HOSPITAL RD
N
STREET
MINT
FRASER BRIDGE RD
MUTHUSWAMY IYER RD
Central
State Express Bus Depot
(POONAMALLEE HIGH ROAD)
Park Town
Govt College of Arts and Crafts
BURIAL GROUND RD
FLAG STAFF ROAD
(SOUTH BEACH ROAD)
ARUNACHALA NAICKEN ST
PALLAVAN SALAI
SERVICES PARADE GROUND & GOLF COURSE
Gymkhana Club
ROAD
ISLAND
War Memorial
Cooum (Kuvam)
AUDITHANAR RD
Rajaji Hall
SWAMI SIVANANDA ROAD
Higginbothams
WALLAJAH ROAD
Madras University
Senate House
ANNA PARK
MGR Samadhi
Christ Church
Chepauk Stadium
Wallajah Mosque
VICTORIA HOSTEL RD
Chepauk
Chepauk Palace
Presidency College
BHARATHI SALAI (PYCROFTS RD)
Tiruvellikeni
Amir Mahal
JANI JHAN KHAN RD
Parthasarathy Temple
ROAD
STREET
WENLOCK PARK
SALAI
MARINA BEACH
KAMARAJAR
ROAD
PILLAI
ANNIE BESANT RD
DR NATESAN
Triumph of Labour
V M STREET
VENKATRANGAM
Vivekananda House
SALAI
Queen Mary's College
Lighthouse
RADHAKRISHNAN SALAI
SALAI
Lighthouse
ROYAPETTAH HIGH RD
ROAD
Buckingham Canal
KAMARAJAR
ROAD
BAZAAR
Tirumailai
Kapaleshvara Temple
CHITRAKULLAM STREET
MYLAPORE
Basilica San Thomé
MANDAVELI STREET
R K MUTT ROAD
LAZARUS CHURCH RD
ROAD
BUTT MODU
SANTHOME HIGH
QUIBBLE ISLAND CEMETERY
Chettinad Palace
Adyar
GARDEN OF REMEMBRANCE
ROAD
ELLIOT'S BEACH
1
2
7
8
9
10

KEY

- ✈ International airport
- ✈ Domestic airport
- Railway station
- Bus station
- M MRTS station
- i Tourist information
- ✚ Hospital
- Police station
- Temple
- Mosque
- Gurdwara
- ✝ Church
- ☒ Post office
- ▬ National highway
- ▬ Major road

0 km 1

0 miles 1


GREATER CHENNAI
Athipattu
Red Hills
NH5
Ambathur
NH4
Mangadu
Meenabakkam
NH45
14
13
12
11
Tambaram
Sozhanganallur
0 km 2
0 miles 2

The Secretariat at Fort St George, the seat of Tamil Nadu's government

Fort St George ❶

Bounded by Sir Muthuswamy Iyer Rd, Flag Staff Rd & Kamarajar Salai (South Beach Rd). **Fort Museum** ***Tel*** *(044) 2538 4510.* ○ *Sat–Thu.* ● *public hols.*

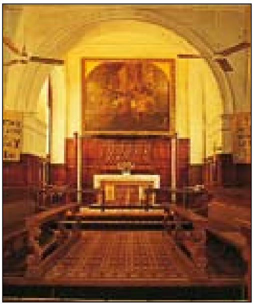
Britain's first bastion in India, the nucleus from which an empire grew, was established in a banana grove owned by a farmer called Madrasan. The official grantfor the land, however, was given by Venkatadri Nayak,the deputy of the Raja of Chandragiri *(see p680)*. The first factory within the fortified enclosure was completed on St George's Day, 23 April 1640, and named Fort St George. This was the East India Company's principal settlement until 1774, when Calcutta, now Kolkata, was declared the seat of the government.

The sloping ramparts, with battlements for gun emplacement that can still be seen today, were designed and constructed by Bartholomew Robins in 1750, after the original walls were destroyed by the French army in 1749. These ramparts form an irregular pentagon, further reinforced by a ring of earthen walls that slope down to a moat surrounding the entire complex. The drawbridges that once led to the Fort's five main gates have now been replaced by roads.

The first building to be seen on entering the Fort through the Sea Gate is the Neo-Classical **Secretariat**, which is today the seat of the government of Tamil Nadu. Behind it lie the **Legislative Council Chambers**. With their handsome classical lines and façades embellished with gleaming black pillars, these impressive buildings, built between 1694 and 1732, are said to be among the oldest surviving British constructions in India. The 45-m (148-ft) tall flagstaff was erected by Governor Elihu Yale in 1687 to hoist the Union Jack for the first time in India. Today, the Indian tricolour flies in its stead. Yale began his career as a clerk with the East India Company and later founded Yale University in the USA, with his considerable fortune.

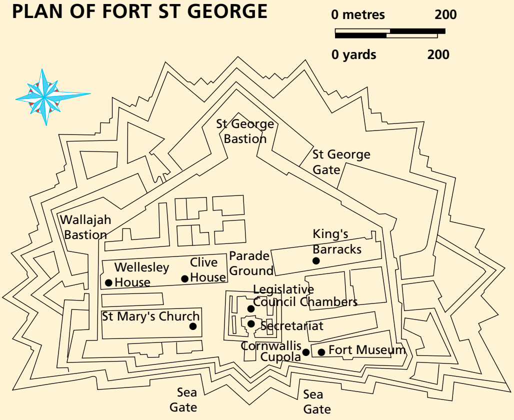
Standing to the south of the Legislature building is **St Mary's Church**, the oldest Anglican church in Asia. It was built between 1678 and 1680 by Streynsham Master, then the governor of Madras. Memorials, paintings, antique Bibles (including one printed in 1660) and silver are displayed in the church, and speak of its vibrant history. Both Elihu Yale and Robert Clive were married in this church, and the three daughters of Job Charnock *(see p267)* were baptized here before the family moved to Bengal. Arthur Wellesley, who later became the Duke of Wellington and triumphed at Waterloo, and Robert Clive, both lived in Fort St George. Their residences, Wellesley House and Clive House, still stand, albeit in a somewhat dilapidated condition, across from the church.

To the north is the **Parade Ground**, formerly Cornwallis Square, which was laid out in 1715. Magnificent parades and rallies were held here. To its east are ministerial offices, and barracks for regiments. Near the southeast corner of



The altar in St Mary's Church with a painting of the Last Supper

PLAN OF FORT ST GEORGE



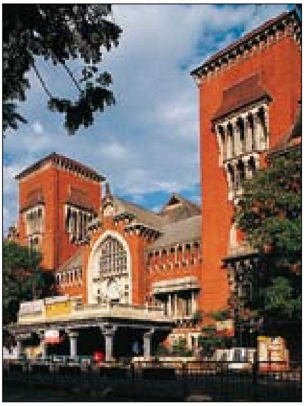
the Parade Ground is the **Fort Museum**, built in the 1780s. A treasure trove of colonial memorabilia, the museum is housed in what was built to be the Public Exchange. It has paintings of British royalty, 18th-century weaponry, emblems and other relics from the British era. Among its prized possessions are a scale model of the Fort and a painting of King George III and Queen Charlotte. There are lithographs on the second and third floors that provide fascinating perspectives of old Madras and other parts of South India.

Near the museum's southern end, and overlooking its cannon, is the **Cornwallis Cupola**, which originally stood in the Parade Ground. It is the largest one built to house the statue of the governor-general, Lord Cornwallis, sculpted in 1800. It shows him accepting the two young sons of Tipu Sultan *(see p517)* as hostages.

George Town ❷

Bounded by Rajaji Salai (North Beach Rd) & NSC Bose Rd.

In the 1640s, weavers and dyers from Andhra Pradesh were settled in this enclave to manufacture cloth for the East India Company's textile trade. The British referred to the settlement as "Black Town", while its inhabitants called it Chennapatnam, from where Chennai gets it name. After the entire area was rebuilt 100 years later, it was renamed George Town. During this period, most of the city's commercial activity was concentrated within this 5-sq km (2-sq mile) area. It still remains a busy hive of activity with public institutions in the south, trade and commercial premises in the centre, and residential quarters in the north.



The General Post Office, George Town

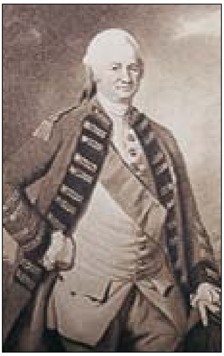
Fruit vendors on the pavements of George Town

The first feature of interest is the 38-m (125-ft) high **Lighthouse** on Rajaji Salai, whose beacon was visible 25 km (16 miles) out at sea. The adjacent red-brick **High Court**, designed by Chisholm in the Indo-Saracenic style, with stained glass and carved furniture, was opened in 1892, while the nearby **General Post Office** with its archways and square towers, is another fine Indo-Saracenic building. **Parry's Corner**, at the junction of NSC Bose Road and Rajaji Salai, is named after Parry and Company. Founded by Thomas Parry in 1790, it is the oldest British mercantile company still operating in Chennai. **Dare House**, the present headquarters of this 200-year-old company, now stands at the site.

The area's longest street, **Mint Street**, gets its name from the authorized mint that was set up here in 1841 to produce gold coins for the British as well as for various local rulers. The mint buildings are now part of the government printing press.

The 17th-century houses lining George Town were once the residences and business centres of Indian as well as Portuguese, Armenian and other foreign traders. **Armenian Street** is named after the many Armenians who lived here, while **Coral Merchant Street** housed a small Jewish community that traded in corals. Today, each street in George Town is dominated by a particular trade. Anderson Street specializes in paper, grain merchants operate from Audiappa Naicken Street, while textile wholesalers have their warehouses on Govindappa Naicken Street and Godown Street. Some streets, such as Kasi Chetty Street and Narayanamudali Street, are lined with shops selling fancy goods and imported bric-a-brac.

ROBERT CLIVE (1725–74)



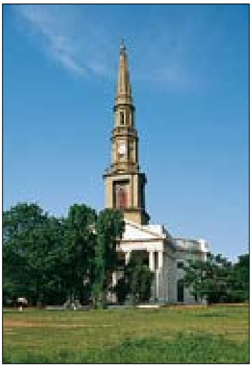
A portrait of Robert Clive by Nathaniel Dance (1773)

One of the most flamboyant personalities in the history of British India, Robert Clive was only 19 when he began his career as a clerk for the East India Company at Fort St George. Soon tiring of paperwork, he became a soldier and fought many successful battles *(see p52)*, including the Carnatic Wars, which established the Company's rule in South India. Clive was given the stewardship of Fort St George and later become Governor of Bengal. The wealth he amassed in India led to his trial, in England, on charges of corruption. Clive committed suicide in 1774.

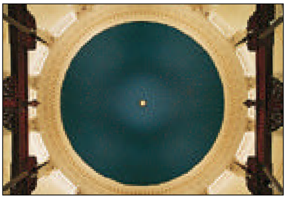
St Andrew's Kirk ❸

A memorial plaque

A magnificent example of Neo-Classical architecture, St Andrew's Kirk was consecrated in 1821. Inspired by St Martin-in-the-Fields in London, it was designed and executed by Major Thomas de Havilland and Colonel James Caldwell of the Madras Engineers, at a cost of £20,000. The body of the church is a circle, with rectangular compartments to the east and west. The circular part, 24.5 m (80 ft) in diameter, is crowned by a shallow masonry dome coloured a deep blue. This is painted with golden stars and supported by 16 fluted pillars with Corinthian capitals.

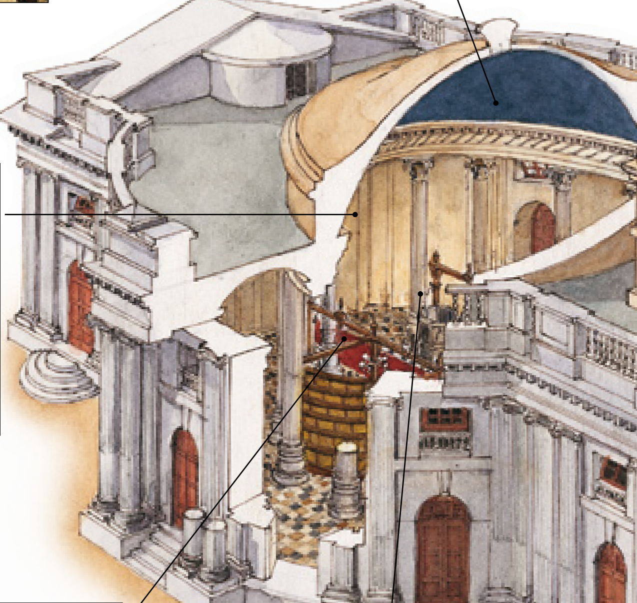


A view of St Andrew's Kirk with its towering steeple



★ Dome

An architectural marvel, the dome has a framework of brick supported by an annular arch and is filled in by pottery cones. Its blue interior is formed by crushed sea shells mixed with lapis lazuli.



Stained glass

The stained-glass windows above the altar, in warm, rich colours, are among the glories of the church.

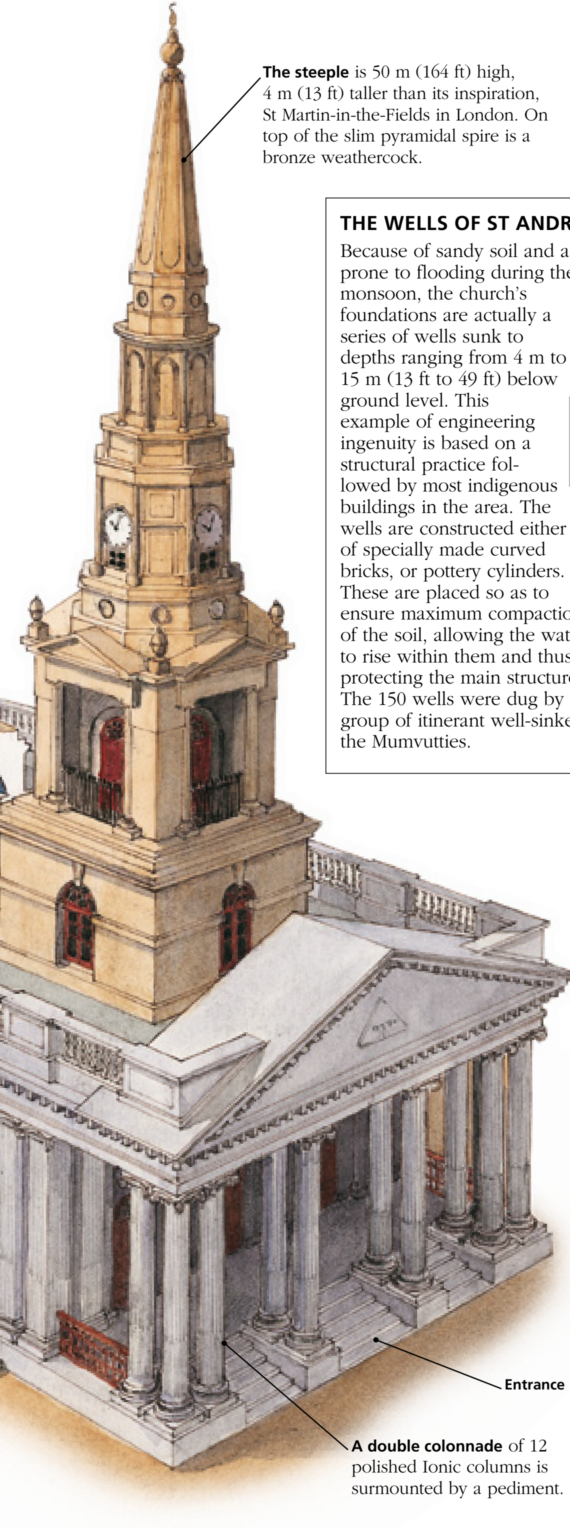
Pews

Superb mahogany pews and a pulpit furnish the interior. From 1839, the pews were let out to prominent citizens; the brass fittings that once held their name cards can still be seen.

Sixteen fluted Corinthian columns support the dome, lending beauty and balance to the design.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Egmore. ***Tel*** *(044) 2561 2608.*
○ *daily.* ✝ *9am & 6pm Sun.*
⚑ *St Andrew's Day (Nov).*



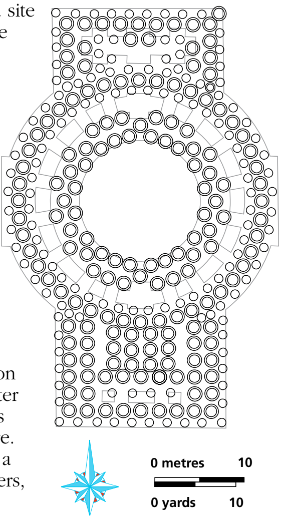
The steeple is 50 m (164 ft) high, 4 m (13 ft) taller than its inspiration, St Martin-in-the-Fields in London. On top of the slim pyramidal spire is a bronze weathercock.

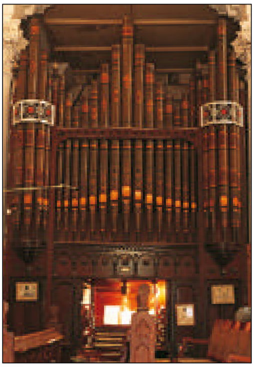
Entrance

A double colonnade of 12 polished Ionic columns is surmounted by a pediment.

THE WELLS OF ST ANDREW'S KIRK

Because of sandy soil and a site prone to flooding during the monsoon, the church's foundations are actually a series of wells sunk to depths ranging from 4 m to 15 m (13 ft to 49 ft) below ground level. This example of engineering ingenuity is based on a structural practice followed by most indigenous buildings in the area. The wells are constructed either of specially made curved bricks, or pottery cylinders. These are placed so as to ensure maximum compaction of the soil, allowing the water to rise within them and thus protecting the main structure. The 150 wells were dug by a group of itinerant well-sinkers, the Mumvutties.





★ Pipe Organ
Dominating the altar is the handsome pipe organ in dull green and burnished gold. Installed in 1883, this instrument was built in Yorkshire, England.

STAR FEATURES

- ★ Dome
- ★ Pipe Organ

A view of Egmore Railway Station, one of the city's major landmarks

Egmore ④

Bounded by Periyar EVR High Rd & Pantheon Rd. ℹ *Egmore Railway Station, (044) 2819 4579.*

The entire area south of Periyar EVR High Road (earlier known as Poonamallee High Road) and the curve of the Cooum river is known as Egmore. This was originally a small village that the East India Company acquired in the late 17th century, as it began to expand its territories. Egmore was also one of the earliest residential localities, where wealthy Company merchants built palatial homes surrounded by luxuriant gardens – the so-called "garden houses" that were extremely popular in colonial Chennai.

The **Government College of Arts and Crafts**, founded in 1850, stands on EVK Sampath Salai. This striking Gothic building and its art gallery were built by Robert Fellowes Chisholm *(see p569)*, who was also appointed its superintendent (principal) in 1877. Its first Indian principal, Debi Prasad Roy Chowdhary, was a renowned painter and sculptor in the 1950s. The artists' village at Cholamandal *(see p578)* was established by bis successor, Dr KCS Panicker. Today the prestigious Government College is one of India's foremost art schools. Its gallery has regular exhibitions of contemporary painting and sculpture by artists and students.

To its west is the **Egmore Railway Station**, another of Chisholm's architectural gems. This is a handsome building, constructed in Indo-Saracenic style, with unconventional flattish domes and pointed arches. The station, operational since the early 20th century, connects Chennai with the rest of Tamil Nadu and the south.

Today Egmore is the up-market commercial heart of Chennai, a concrete jungle of offices, department stores, boutiques and hotels. On Pantheon Road are the largest showrooms of Co-Optex *(see p574)*, a unit of the Tamil Nadu Handloom Textiles Cooperative, which sells handwoven silk and cotton saris and fabrics from the state.

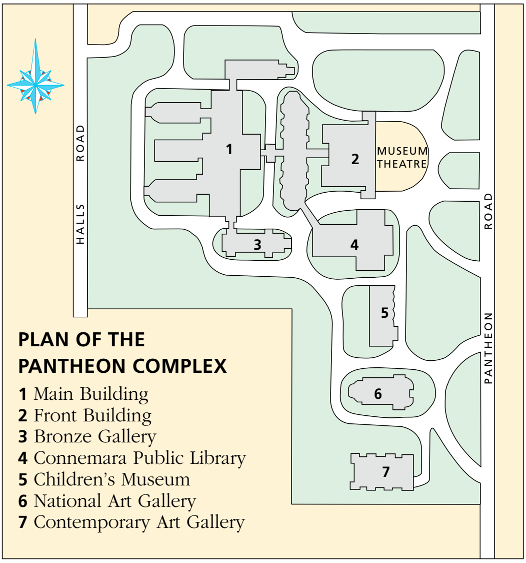
Standing Buddhas from Amravati

The Pantheon Complex ⑤

Pantheon Rd. ***Tel*** *(044) 2819 3778.* ○ *Sat–Thu.* ● *public hols.*
Connemara Public Library ***Tel*** *(044) 2819 1842.* ○ *daily.*

This complex of cultural institutions derives its name from The Pantheon, where the Public Assembly Rooms were housed in the 18th century. At the time, its spacious tree-lined grounds were the venue for all public entertainment in the city.

The Indo-Saracenic **Government Museum**, with its faded red walls and labyrinth of staircases and



PLAN OF THE PANTHEON COMPLEX

- **1** Main Building
- **2** Front Building
- **3** Bronze Gallery
- **4** Connemara Public Library
- **5** Children's Museum
- **6** National Art Gallery
- **7** Contemporary Art Gallery

The façade of the National Art Gallery, built in Neo-Mughal style

interconnecting galleries, is spread over five sections of a large complex, each with a specific collection of objects. The 30,000-odd exhibits range from rocks and fossils to books and sculptures.

The Archaeological Section, in the main building, is noted for its exceptional collection of South Indian antiquities. The exhibits include stone and metal sculpture, woodcarvings and manuscripts. Its rare collection of Buddhist antiquities numbers over 1,500 pieces. A major section comprises artifacts from Amravati *(see p675)*, that were brought here in the early 1800s by an intrepid Englishman, Colonel Colin Mackenzie. On display are sculptural reliefs, panels and free-standing statues. Objects include a 2nd-century votive slab with a rendering of a stupa, and numerous stone panels with episodes from the Buddha's life depicted in low relief.

The Numismatics Section has a large collection of coins, particularly South Indian and Mughal coins. There are also some gold Gupta coins with Sanskrit inscriptions.

The Government Museum was one of the earliest institutions in India where ethnology and prehistoric archaeology were represented as museum subjects. The Anthropology Section, in the front building, has a good collection of prehistoric antiquities, including cooking utensils and hunting tools, among them the first palaeolith in India, discovered in 1863 by Bruce Foote. The Zoological Section, in the main building, is one of the largest sections of the Museum. Although its scope is limited to South Indian fauna, a few non-indigenous animals and birds, such as the macaw, mandarin duck, and golden pheasant, have been added to enrich the collection. There is also an 18.5-m (60-ft) long whale skeleton on display. The adjoining 19th-century Museum Theatre, a semi-circular structure also built in Indo-Saracenic style, was initially used as a lecture hall. It is now a venue for public performances.

Parvati, 9th century, Chola period

Some of the finest examples of South Indian bronze casting are on display in the **Bronze Gallery**. Its superb collection of almost 700 bronzes, specifically from the Pallava and Chola periods (between the 9th and 13th centuries) have been retrieved from temples and sites in the region. There are many impressive sculptures of the Nataraja – the depiction of Shiva performing his cosmic dance of creation *(see p566)*. Another outstanding piece is an 11th-century Chola Ardhanarisvara, a composite figure where Shiva and his consort Parvati are joined together to form a holistic entity. Bronzes of other gods and goddesses in the Hindu pantheon, include Rama, Sita and Ganesha. The panorama of images also includes various Buddhist bronzes from Amravati, a Chola Tara and Maitreya Avalokitesvara, and 11th century images of various Jain *tirthankaras*.

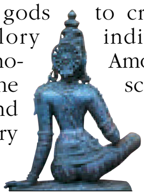
Opposite is the imposing **Connemara Public Library**, inaugurated in 1896. This structure, with its profuse stucco decoration, woodwork and stained-glass windows, was named after a dissolute brother of the viceroy, Lord Mayo. It is one of India's four national libraries and contains every book published in the country. Its oldest and most prized possession is a Bible, dated 1608.

The **National Art Gallery**, the former Victoria Memorial Hall and Technical Institute, is perhaps the finest building in the complex. Designed by Henry Irwin, one of the city's most celebrated architects, it was constructed in 1909 in Neo-Mughal style with a pink sandstone finish. Its immense door echoes the monumental gateways of Fatehpur Sikri *(see pp180–83)*. On display are more Chola bronzes, including two fine images of Rama and Sita, and a superb 11th-century Nataraja. Nearby, the **Contemporary Art Gallery** has a collection of contemporary Indian art, with works by renowned South Indian artists, among them Raja Ravi Varma *(see p626)*.

A 2nd-century stupa panel from Amravati

Shiva, the Cosmic Dancer

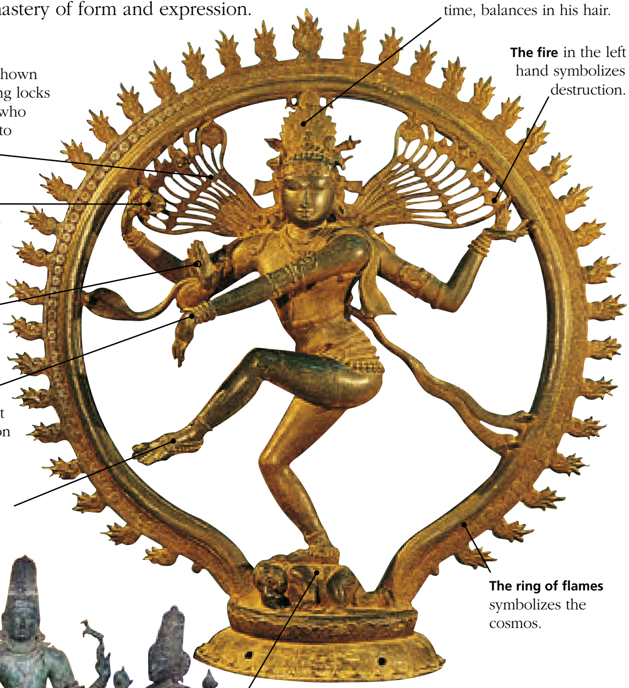
Bronze sculptures depicting gods and goddesses, are the glory of South Indian art. Strict iconographic guidelines determine the proportions of each image and the symbolic meaning of every stance, hand gesture, weapon, and adornment. Master sculptors working within these rules were able, nevertheless, to create images of extraordinary individuality, power and grace. Among the most remarkable bronze sculptures are those of Shiva as Nataraja, the Cosmic Dancer, and his wife Parvati. Richly symbolic in their iconography, they were made during the Chola period, from the 9th to the 13th centuries.



A slender bronze image of Parvati

NATARAJA

The Nataraja figure of Shiva as the Cosmic Dancer symbolizes nature's cycle of evolution and transmutation, and displays the Chola artists' mastery of form and expression.



A tiny crescent moon, a symbol of the passage of time, balances in his hair.

The fire in the left hand symbolizes destruction.

Goddess Ganga is shown among Shiva's flying locks since it was Shiva who eased her descent to earth *(see p163)*.

The drum in his right hand symbolizes the rhythm of creation.

An open palm grants freedom from fear.

The left palm pointing to the foot symbolizes salvation from ignorance.

The left leg is lifted up in an animated dance movement.

The ring of flames symbolizes the cosmos.

The right leg tramples Apasmara, a dwarfish figure representing ignorance.

The marriage of Shiva and Parvati *is a beautiful example of Chola art. It shows Shiva, standing regal and tall, tenderly holding his bashful bride Parvati's hand. Vishnu, as the brother of Parvati, is shown as an onlooker.*

Bronze images *representing the main temple deity are taken out in processions on festive occasions. These images are clad in silk and decked with sandalwood paste and floral garlands.*

See also features on Hindu Mythology *(see pp24–5)*, Ganesha *(see p467)* and Vishnu *(see p679)*.

The multi-arched façade of the Thousand Lights Mosque

Anna Salai ⑥

From Cooum Island to Little Mount.
Rajaji Hall ***Tel*** *(044) 2536 5635.*
○ *daily.*

A long arterial road leading from north Chennai to Little Mount at its southern end *(see p573)*, Anna Salai (or Mount Road) is the city's main thoroughfare. The "garden houses" that belonged to Chennai's elite stood on either side of it until well into the early years of the 20th century. Today, it is a modern commercial road, lined with hoardings depicting film stars, and the expansive homes of the past have been replaced by multistoreyed buildings.

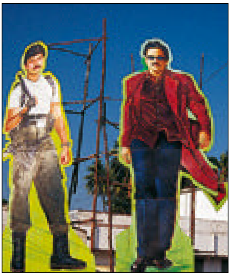
Anna Salai begins on an island in Cooum Creek, just south of Fort St George. The site is watched over by the statue of Sir Thomas Munro, the governor of the Madras Presidency from 1819 to 1826. Nearby, set in an expanse of greenery, is the prestigious **Gymkhana Club**. Sited close to the army headquarters, this was an exclusive facility for military officers. Until 1920, its membership was restricted to garrison officers only and, even today, the club grounds belong to the armed services.

The **Old Government Estate**, southwest of the Gymkhana Club, houses the mansion where the governors of Madras once lived in regal splendour. Though the main building is falling apart, the banqueting hall, built in 1802 by the second Lord Clive, the eldest son of Robert Clive, retains its grandeur. It was named **Rajaji Hall** after the first Indian governor-general, C Rajagopalachari, popularly known as Rajaji. Inside this elegant Neo-Classical building, an impressive broad staircase leads up to the vast banqueting hall, which has beautiful panelling and chandeliers. Anna Salai then enters its commercial stretch. Along this length of the road are some of the city's oldest commercial landmarks, including one of India's largest bookshops, **Higginbotham's** *(see p574)*, **Spencer's**, an international department store, and the **Taj Connemara**, one of the city's finest hotels *(see p713)*.

Across the road is the **Old Madras Club**, now somewhat dilapidated. Established in 1832, it was known in its heyday as the "Ace of Clubs". The 19th-century **Thousand Lights Mosque** further down, gets its name from the tradition of lighting 1,000 oil lamps to illuminate the Assembly Hall that once occupied the site. Standing further south is **St George's Cathedral**, planned by James Lillyman Caldwell and built by Thomas de Havilland in 1814. Its 42 m (138 ft) tall spire is one of Chennai's major landmarks.

Main altar in St George's Cathedral, built in the early 19th century

FILM STARS AND POLITICS



Hoardings depicting popular South Indian heroes

The South Indian film industry, particularly Tamil and Telugu cinema, is credited with having been the breeding ground of many politicians. The first chief minister from the Dravidian Party (then called DMK), the late Dr CN Annadurai, as well as his immediate successor, M Karunanidhi, were both scriptwriters with large followings. However, the most remarkable actor-turned-politican was Marudur Gopalamenon Ramachandran, whose portrayal of a swashbuckling hero made him the embodiment of righteousness. Popularly known as MGR, he acquired a cult status in the region and was chief minister of Tamil Nadu from 1977 to 1987. His co-star and protégée, Jayalalitha, another charismatic chief minister, was ousted on charges of corruption in 2001, but was reinstated later that year. Current heroes, such as Rajnikant and Chiranjeevi, have more macho images that depend heavily on daredevil stunts. They, too, have fans throughout South India.

A Walk along the Marina ❼

Chennai's seashore hosts one of India's largest urban beaches, stretching for 13 km (8 miles) along the city's eastern flank. The Marina, connecting Fort St George with San Thomé Basilica almost 5 km (3 miles) away, was built by Mounstuart Elphinstone Grant-Duff, the governor between 1881 and 1886. Described by architectural historian Philip Davies as "one of the most beautiful marine promenades in the world", it is a favourite place for Chennai's citizens to escape the humid heat of the city and enjoy the sea breezes. The walk along Kamarajar Salai (earlier known as South Beach Road) takes in parks, tree-lined cobbled streets and spectacular colonial and Indo-Saracenic buildings.

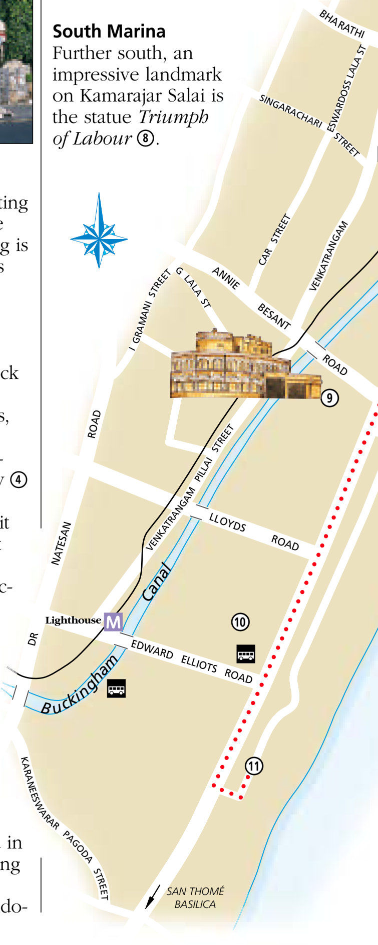
The Indo-Saracenic Presidency College, nucleus of Madras University

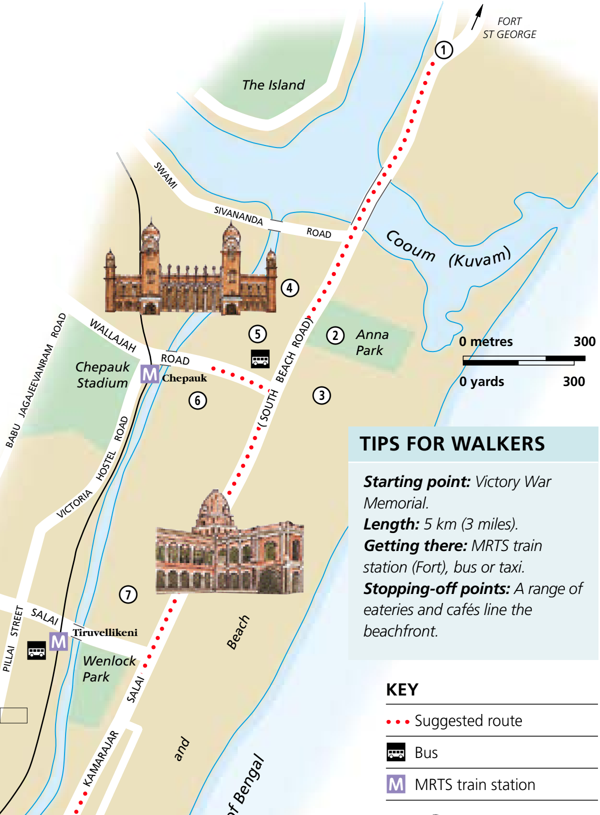
Anna Park
The walk starts from the Victory War Memorial ① which marks the north end of Kamarajar Salai. This memorial originally commemorated the victory of the Allied armies during World War I, and was later dedicated to the memory of those soldiers from the Madras Presidency who lost their lives in World War II. To its south, in Anna Park, is the Anna Samadhi ②, a memorial erected in honour of CN Annadurai, the former chief minister of Tamil Nadu, who introduced significant political and social reforms in the state. Further south is the MGR Samadhi ③, a commemorative garden with gateways and pathways, built in honour of the popular Tamil film icon and chief minister, MG Ramachandran *(see p567)*. An array of souvenir shops and eateries can be found along this stretch of the beach, attracting tourists from the rest of the state. Particularly interesting is the Sunday market, with its curious jumble of goods.

Victory War Memorial, Kamarajar Salai

North Marina
Across Kamarajar Salai is a series of imposing red brick buildings, built in a combination of architectural styles, which include Indian and Moorish features. The Indo-Saracenic Madras University ④ was founded in 1857, making it one of the oldest universities in India. An architectural marvel, the Senate House ⑤ was designed by Robert Chisholm in a mixture of Byzantine and Saracenic styles. This became the headquarters of Madras University in 1879. These buildings now stand in what was once the sprawling estate of the old Chepauk Palace ⑥. This splendid Indo-Saracenic structure, on Wallajah Road, was once the home of the Nawab of Arcot. Though the palace was built in 1768, Chisholm added the extensions, including the tower that once connected the two wings. It now houses government offices. Chepauk Stadium, Chennai's famous cricket ground, lies behind the palace. Further down the road is Presidency College ⑦, the first institution in South India for higher education, founded in 1840. This rather austere structure has a ribbed dome with four clocks on its surface. Among the famous alumni of the college are the first Indian governor-general, C Rajagopalachari, and the Nobel Prize-winning physicists, CV Raman and his nephew, S Chandrasekhar.

South Marina
Further south, an impressive landmark on Kamarajar Salai is the statue *Triumph of Labour* ⑧.




FORT ST GEORGE
①
The Island
SWAMI SIVANANDA ROAD
Cooum (Kuvam)
④
⑤
② Anna Park
0 metres 300
0 yards 300
WALLAJAH ROAD
BABU JAGAJEEVANRAM ROAD
Chepauk Stadium
Chepauk
⑥
(SOUTH BEACH ROAD)
③
VICTORIA HOSTEL ROAD
⑦
SALAI
PILLAI STREET
Tiruvellikeni
Wenlock Park
SALAI
KAMARAJAR
Beach
and
Bay of Bengal
Promenade
⑧
Marina

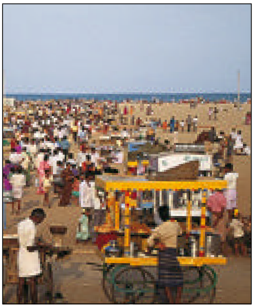
TIPS FOR WALKERS

Starting point: *Victory War Memorial.*
Length: *5 km (3 miles).*
Getting there: *MRTS train station (Fort), bus or taxi.*
Stopping-off points: *A range of eateries and cafés line the beachfront.*

KEY

- ••• Suggested route
- 🚌 Bus
- Ⓜ MRTS train station

***Triumph of Labour* by Debi Prasad Roy Chowdhary, 1959**



A busy evening scene on the Marina Beach

This sculpture was created by Debi Prasad Roy Chowdhary *(see p564)*, who became the first Indian principal of the Madras School of Arts and Crafts in 1929.

West of the main road, off Annie Besant Road, is the Ice House ⑨, till recently a women's hostel known as Vivekananda House. In the 1840s, this circular building, with a stone pineapple perched on its roof, was a storehouse for ice, which was imported all the way from New England (USA). It was also the site from which Swami Vivekananda *(see p615)* delivered his speeches when he visited the city. It has now been handed over to the Ramakrishna Mission which has plans to restore it. Further south is Queen Mary's College ⑩, today the Madras College for Women. Opened in July 1914, this was Chennai's first women's college. A bust of the queen still graces the entrance of the building. An imposing lighthouse ⑪ marks the southern end of the Marina.

ROBERT CHISHOLM'S LEGACY

Robert Fellowes Chisholm (1845–84) was among the most talented architects in India in the mid-19th century. In 1864, Chisholm's designs for the proposed Presidency College and Senate House won a competition, and he was appointed the consulting architect to the Madras government. The next 15 years saw considerable building activity along the Marina, where many innovative buildings were erected. Chisholm's designs blended Italian and Saracenic features so that the new structures would harmonize with the existing Chepauk Palace. For many years he was the head of the School of Industrial Art, founded in 1855 and now known as the Government College of Fine Arts.

Senate House, Robert Chisholm's signature building, completed in 1873

Fruits on sale at Triplicane Market

Triplicane ❽

Off Kamarajar Salai (South Beach Rd). **Parthasarathi Temple** ○ *daily.* ✺ *Neeratu Utsavam (Dec).*

The crowded suburb of Triplicane was among the first villages to be acquired by the East India Company in the 1670s. It derives its name from the sacred lily tank *(tiru-alli-keni)* that once stood here. One of the oldest temples in the city, the historic **Parthasarathi Temple**, is situated in Triplicane. Built in the 9th century, the temple is dedicated to Krishna (or Partha) in his role as Arjuna's divine charioteer *(sarathi)* in the epic, the *Mahabharata (see p26)*. The temple festival, in December, attracts thousands of devotees. At one time, the residences of the priestly Brahmin caste were clustered in the narrow lanes around the temple. Among them were the homes of the mathematical genius, Srinivasa Ramanujan (1887–1920), and the early 20th-century nationalist poet, Subramania Bharati.

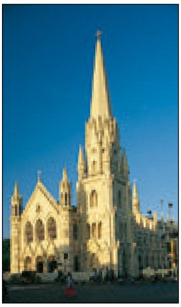
Triplicane was once part of the kingdom of Golconda *(see pp666–7)*, and as a result this quarter has the largest concentration of Muslims in the city. The Nawab of Arcot, Muhammad Ali Wallajah (1749–95), an ally of the British in their struggle for power against the French, contributed generously to the construction of a large mosque here in 1795. Known as the **Wallajah (Big) Mosque**, this beautiful grey granite structure with slender minarets is situated on Triplicane High Road. The adjoining graveyard contains the tombs of various Muslim saints. The nawab's descendants still live in Triplicane, in a stately mansion known as **Amir Mahal**. Constructed in 1798, it became their residence after the Chepauk Palace *(see p568)* was taken over by the British.

The graceful façade of Wallajah Mosque, with its flanking minarets

Mylapore & San Thomé ❾

S of Triplicane. **Kapaleshvara Temple** ○ *daily.* **Basilica of San Thomé** ○ *daily.* **Luz Church** ○ *daily.*

The site of a great Pallava port in the 7th and 8th centuries, Mylapore is today one of the busiest parts of the city. This traditional quarter, with its religious organizations, tiny houses and lively bazaars, is dominated by the **Kapaleshvara Temple**, the largest in Chennai. The main deity, Shiva, is symbolized as a peacock *(mayil)*, thus giving the area its original name, Mayilapura, the "Town of the Peacocks". According to legend, Shiva's consort, Parvati, assumed the form of a peahen to worship Shiva, represented here by his linga. A sculptural panel in a small shrine in the courtyard depicts the legend. The present temple was built after the original was destroyed by the Portuguese in the 16th century. Mylapore's links with Christianity date to the 1st century AD, to the time of St Thomas *(see p573)*. In the 10th century, a group of Nestorian Christians from Persia (Iran) discovered the saint's burial site and built a church and tomb. The Portuguese, following the trail of the saint, established the settlement of San Thomé in the early 16th century. The present **Basilica of San Thomé**, over the tomb of the saint, is an impressive Gothic-style structure built in 1898. It has an ornate interior with magnificent stained-glass windows and a towering steeple. The crypt is said to contain a small bone from the saint's hand and the weapon that killed him.



The Gothic-style Basilica of San Thomé

Nearby is the **Luz Church**, which was built by a Franciscan monk in 1516, making it the oldest Catholic church in Chennai.

Adyar ⑩

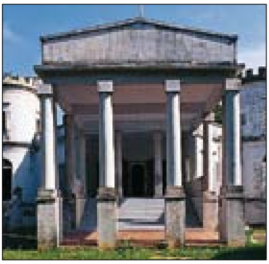
S of San Thomé, across Adyar river. **Theosophical Society** *Tel (044) 2491 2474.* ○ *Mon–Fri & (Sat morn).* **Brodie Castle** ○ *daily.*

Few places in Chennai offer greater serenity than the sprawling gardens of the **Theosophical Society**, situated in the city's Adyar neighbourhood, on the banks of the Adyar river. Founded in New York in 1875, the Society moved here seven years later when it acquired Huddlestone Gardens. Built in 1776 by John Huddlestone, a wealthy civilian, this large mansion is today the world headquarters of the Society. Its magnificent 108-ha (270-acre) estate comprises several 19th-century buildings, one of which is the former home of its founder Colonel Henry S Olcott.

The main building houses the Great Hall, almost spartan in its simplicity, where prayer meetings are held. Bas-reliefs, representing the different faiths, and engravings of verses taken from the holy books of all world religions can be seen here. There are also marble statues of the founders, Colonel Olcott and Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, as well as one of Annie Besant, who became president in 1907.

The Adyar Library and Research Centre, founded by Olcott in 1886, is one of the finest libraries in India. Its collection of 165,000 books and 20,000 palm-leaf and parchment manuscripts has made it a valuable repository for Indological research. The surrounding tranquil gardens have shrines dedicated to various faiths. The greatest attraction here, however, is the 400-year-old banyan tree, whose spreading branches cover an immense area of 4,180 sq m (44,993 sq ft). Over the decades, many of the Society's meetings and spiritual discourses were held under its canopy. Unfortunately, a terrible storm in 1989 destroyed its main trunk.

The 400-year-old banyan tree in the gardens of the Theosophical Society



The pillared entrance of Brodie Castle in Adyar

Brodie Castle, north of the Theosophical Society, is an imposing white structure on the banks of the Adyar. Now known as Thenral, it houses the prestigious College of Carnatic Music. Built in 1796 by James Brodie, an employee of the East India Company, it is said to be among the first "garden-houses" built in the city. These spacious, airy houses with broad pillared verandahs, set in sprawling wooded gardens, were characteristic of colonial Chennai. This house later became the home of the first Chief Justice of the Madras Supreme Court.

Further north of Brodie Castle is the **Madras Club**, built by George Moubray, who came to India as an accountant in 1771. He acquired 42 ha (104 acres) of land on the banks of the Adyar, and built a house with a central cupola, surrounded by a beautiful garden. Known as Moubray's Cupola, this was once the exclusive preserve of the city's European population. Indians were only allowed membership in 1964, after it merged with the Adyar Club.

THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

In the 1870s, Colonel Henry S Olcott, a veteran of the American Civil War, met the Russian aristocrat and clairvoyant, Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky in Vermont (USA) at the farm of the Christian Scientist, Mary Baker Eddy. Soon after, they launched a movement to foster the spirit of universal brotherhood, aiming to create a Utopian society in which people of all castes, creeds and colour could live in harmony. The movement attracted great thinkers and intellectuals, among them Dr Annie Besant, president of the Indian National Congress in 1917. The idea of forming a national political party was, in fact, first voiced in the 1890s at the Society's headquarters in Adyar, under the banyan tree, by the British civil servant AO Hume. The famous philosopher Jiddu Krishnamurti was also associated with the Society.

Theosophical Society

A Bharat Natyam dance lesson in progress at Kalakshetra

Kalakshetra ⑪

Thiruvanmiyur, East Coast Rd. 🚌 *or taxi.* ***Tel*** *(044) 2452 1844.* ○ *daily.* 🎉 *Kalakshetra Arts Festival (Dec/Jan).*

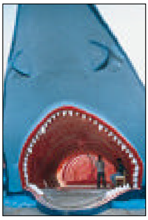
This pioneering institution for classical dance, music and the fine arts, established in 1936, was the brainchild of Rukmini Devi. A protégée of Annie Besant, she was deeply influenced by the progressive views of the Theosophical Society *(see p571)*. At 16, she scandalized conservative society by marrying George Sydney Arundale, the 40-year-old Australian principal of the Society's school. The couple's extensive travels around the world exposed Rukmini to the world of Western culture, specially dance, inspiring her to study ballet under the great Russian ballerina, Anna Pavlova. Back in Chennai, she again defied tradition by learning and performing the classical *dasi attam*, hitherto the domain of *devadasis* (temple dancers). The International Centre for the Arts, which she set up for the revival of this dance form, now called Bharat Natyam, *(see p29)*, is today Kalakshetra, the "Temple of Art".

The school is set in a vast 40-ha (99-acre) campus, where classical music and dance are taught according to the traditional methods, by which a guru imparts knowledge to a small group of students. Some of India's best known dancers, including Yamini Krishnamurti, and the institute's current director, Leela Samson, were trained here. At the end of each year, a festival is held and performances are staged in an auditorium designed like a *koottambulam,* the traditional theatre of Kerala temples *(see p639)*.

MGR Film City ⑫

Near Indira Nagar. 🚌 ***Tel*** *(044) 2254 2424.* ○ *daily* 🎉 📷 *extra charges.*

One of Chennai's newest attractions is a film city, dedicated to the memory of the hugely popular matinée idol, MG Ramachandran *(see p567)*. This is now the most popular location for Chennai's flourishing Tamil film industry, which is second only to Mumbai *(see pp32–3)* in film production. A fantasy world of extravagant sets and hi-tech equipment, Film City attracts starstruck fans from all over Tamil Nadu, who come here to catch a glimpse of their favourite film stars.



A film set in MGR Film City

Guindy National Park ⑬

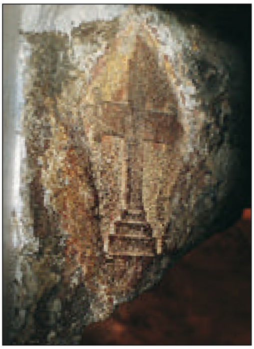
S Chennai. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Rd. 🚉 *Guindy station.* 🚌 ○ *Wed–Mon.* 🎉 **Raj Bhavan** ● *to public.*

Once a distant suburb which was nearly twice its current size, Guindy has now been engulfed by the fast growing metropolis of Greater Chennai. Originally part of the private forest surrounding Guindy Lodge, a portion was officially declared the Guindy National Park in 1977. This predominantly dry deciduous scrub jungle of acacia is interspersed with larger trees such as sandalwood *(Santalam album)*, banyan *(Ficus bengalensis)* and *jamun (Syzygium cumini)*. Its most famous residents are the herds of endangered blackbuck *(Antelope cervicapra)*, introduced in 1924. Among its 130 species of birds are raptors such as the honey buzzard and the white-bellied sea eagle. Winter is the best time for birdwatching, when migrant birds visit the forest. Also located within the park is the **Madras Snake Park**, established in the 1970s by Romulus Whitaker, the American zoologist, who also set up the Crocodile Bank outside Chennai *(see p578)*. Today, the well-maintained Snake Park houses numerous species of snakes, among them king cobras, vipersand pythons. Other reptiles include crocodiles,

A song-and-dance sequence being shot on location for a Tamil movie turtles and lizards. Large information boards, strategically placed, provide interesting details on the habitat and behaviour of the various species. For those who are interested, there are live demonstrations of venom extraction; the venom is used as an antidote for snake bites.

The historic 300-year-old Guindy Lodge, to the west of the Park, is now the **Raj Bhavan**, the residence of the governor of Tamil Nadu. Built as a weekend retreat for the city's British rulers, this handsome white building was renovated and expanded in the mid-1800s by the then governor, Grant-Duff.

Today, Guindy has some of the city's most prestigious institutions. The area also has many impressive memorials to modern India's leaders, Mahatma Gandhi, K Kamaraj and C Rajagopalachari.



The Masonry Cross, engraved on a rock in the cave, Little Mount

Façade of the Church of Our Lady of Expectations, Mount of St Thomas

Little Mount & Mount of St Thomas ⓮

SW Chennai. Near Marmalog Bridge.
🚉 *St Thomas Mount station.* 🚌

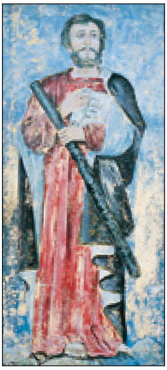
A rock-hewn cave on Little Mount is believed to be the place where, in AD 72, the mortally wounded St Thomas sought refuge. Near the modern **Church of Our Lady of Good Health** is the older **Blessed Sacrament Chapel** built by the Portuguese over the cave. Inside the cave is the opening through which the fleeing saint is said to have retreated, leaving behind a still visible imprint of his hand near the entrance. At the rear end of the cave is the Masonry Cross before which St Thomas is said to have prayed. By the **Church of the Resurrection** is a perennial spring with curative powers. Legend claims that the spring originated when St Thomas struck the rock with his staff to provide water for his thirsty congregation.

About 3 km (2 miles) southwest of Little Mount is the 95-m (312-ft) high Mount of St Thomas or Great Mount. A flight of 132 steps leads to the summit and the **Church of Our Lady of Expectations**, built by the Portuguese in the 16th century. The most important relic here is the ancient stone cross embedded into the wall of the altar. Said to have been engraved by the saint himself, this is the legendary "bleeding cross" that miraculously bled between 1558 and 1704.

Below the eastern flank of the Mount is the **Cantonment** area, with its shady streets lined with 18th-century Neo-Classical bungalows.

ST THOMAS IN INDIA

According to legend, St Thomas or Doubting Thomas, one of the 12 apostles, came to South India soon after Jesus Christ died. He is said to have arrived in Cranganore *(see p649)* in AD 52 and spent the next 12 years along the Malabar Coast, spreading the Gospel and converting the local population. He gradually moved eastwards and finally settled in Mylapore *(see p570)*. He spent the last years of his life in a cave on Little Mount, from where he would walk every day to the beach, resting for a while and preaching in the groves. It is said that one day in AD 72, while praying on the Mount of St Thomas, he was mortally wounded by a lance, and fled to Little Mount, where he died. His body was carried by his converts to San Thomé, where he was buried in the crypt of the small chapel he had built. This is today the Basilica of San Thomé, and the large stained-glass window depicts his story. The Portuguese colonized Mylapore in the early 16th century, lured by accounts left by the 13th-century Venetian traveller, Marco Polo, who had visited the early Nestorian chapel here. The saint holds a special place in the hearts of Indians, and was decreed the Apostle of India in 1972.



Portrait of St Thomas

Shopping & Entertainment in Chennai

As the capital of Tamil Nadu, Chennai has an excellent selection of handicrafts and handwoven textiles from the state. From shimmering silks in glowing colours and finely woven cottons to jewellery and replicas of Chola bronzes, the choice is enormous. The city's shopping centres include up-market department stores, malls and trendy boutiques, as well as the vibrant local bazaars which sell a wide range of merchandise. Chennai is also the cultural capital of South India, where performances of classical dance and music take place throughout the year. The height of the cultural season is from mid-December to mid-January, when the city hosts the prestigious Chennai Festival.

SHOPS AND MARKETS

The best shopping in Chennai can be found in the more traditional areas, such as Panagal Park, Pondy and Burma bazaars, and the lanes around the temple at Mylapore. These were small street markets that have now grown into mini shopping malls, where everything is available at bargain prices. Chennai's oldest department store, Spencer's, partially burned down in the 1980s, and has now been rebuilt as a modern mall. It houses shops selling merchandise as varied as groceries and imported Swiss watches. Next door is the city's oldest landmark, **VTI** (Victoria Technical Institute), where handicrafts and a range of good quality linen are sold. This charitable organization supports South Indian Christian missions that specialize in exquisite hand-embroidery.

Most shops are open Monday to Friday, from 9:30am to 7pm. Bazaars, however, keep more flexible hours.

JEWELLERY AND ANTIQUES

The best place for high quality traditional South Indian gold jewellery is **Vummidi Bangaru Jewellers**. They also stock excellent reproductions of the gem-encrusted costume jewellery worn by classical dancers. **Prince Jewellery**, in Panagal Park, has jewellery from Kerala and also specializes in light weight gold ornaments. Modern and traditional silverware and jewellery are available at **Sukhra** and **Amethyst**.

Genuine antiques are hard to find. However, **Rani Arts & Crafts** stocks copies of old artifacts, including brass and metal images and objects, Tanjore (Thanjavur) paintings *(see p597)* and lacquerware.

TEXTILES AND SARIS

Tamil Nadu is renowned for the richness and variety of its silk and cotton textiles, a good selection of which is available in Chennai. **Radha Silks**, **Kumaran Silks** and **Sundari Silks** are famous all over India for their wonderful range of fabrics and silk saris from Kanchipuram *(see p583)*. **Nalli's**, a huge multistoreyed shop, has the widest range of Kanchipuram saris, and is always packed with local shoppers, particularly during the festival and wedding seasons. Other outlets are **Man Mandir** and **Shilpi**, a small boutique that sells saris and home furnishings. **Fabindia** too, stocks furnishings and ready-made garments. A good variety of textiles can be found at **Co-optex**, the large Tamil Nadu Cooperative of Textiles showroom. This pioneering society has encouraged the revival of handlooms.

HANDICRAFTS AND GIFTS

A fine selection of handicrafts can be found at **Poompuhar**, the Tamil Nadu State Emporium. VTI also sells handicrafts, though hand-embroidered linen and nightwear are their main specialities. **Cane and Bamboo** is another interesting little shop with an assortment of gift items and souvenirs.

Apparao Galleries not only stocks paintings by contemporary Indian artists, but also has an accessory shop for gifts and home products. Their boutique sells trendy designer-wear.

Naturally Auroville specializes in natural products made in the Pondicherry Ashram and Auroville *(see pp586–8)*. The merchandise includes pottery, handmade paper, perfumed candles, incense sticks and aromatherapy oils and lotions.

Chennai is also a good place to shop for handcrafted musical instruments, such as the violin, *mridangam* and *veena*. While these are found at many outlets in the city, the best selections are available at **Musee Musicals** and **Sapthaswara Music Store**. **Music World** stocks a wide range of CDs and audio cassettes by well-known Carnatic musicians. The city also has a number of excellent bookshops. Of these, the oldest and most well-stocked is **Higginbotham's**, established in 1844.

ENTERTAINMENT GUIDES, TICKETS AND VENUES

Announcements of performances of Carnatic music *(see p595)* and classical dance such as Bharat Natyam *(see p28)*, appear regularly in the entertainment columns of local newspapers. The city guides *Hallo! Madras and Chennai This Fortnight* list entertainment venues and information on tickets.

Performances of music and dance are held throughout the year. However, the peak season is from 15 December to 15 January, when the Chennai Festival, organized by the city's *sabhas* (cultural societies), takes place. During this period more than 500 concerts are held. The most prestigious cultural centre is the **Music Academy**. Other venues are **Narada Gana Sabha**, **Sri Krishna Gana Sabha** and **Karthik Fine Arts**. Classical dance and music performances are also held at the **Museum Theatre** in the Pantheon Complex *(see p564)* and the auditorium at **Kalakshetra** *(see p572)*.

MUSIC AND DANCE

Since the 1920s, Chennai has been the leading centre of Carnatic music and classical dance. The first music festival took place in December 1927 during the Madras session of the Indian National Congress. A year later, the Music Academy was established to promote Carnatic music, and in 1936, Rukmini Devi set up Kalakshetra to popularize Bharat Natyam, the dance form once performed only in temples. Today, these two institutions along with the many *sabhas* are the major sponsors of music and dance events in the city.

During the season, music lovers gather in Chennai to hear India's top performers as well as promising new talent. Concerts of Carnatic music, both vocal and instrumental, begin in the morning and often last till midnight. Dance recitals are also held. Recently, some dancers have experimented with the traditional repertoire to create a contemporary form that is a fusion of Indian folk and classical forms with Western themes.

CINEMA

The choice of films that show at Chennai's many cinemas, such as **Devi**, **Ega**, **Gaiety** (founded in 1919), and the **Sathyam Cineplex**, ranges from Bollywood and Tamil blockbusters to the latest Hollywood releases. Tamil films are very similar to those produced in Mumbai's Bollywood, with song and dance sequences and a great deal of melodrama. But they play a role far beyond mere entertainment – their themes often have a social message and their charismatic actors, with their political links *(see p567)*, make them a potent medium of communication, especially among rural audiences.

DIRECTORY

JEWELLERY AND ANTIQUES

Amethyst
14 Padmavathi Rd,
Jeyapore Colony,
Gopalapuram.
Tel *(044) 2835 1627.*

Prince Jewellery
13 Nagaeswara Rao Rd,
Panagal Park.
Tel (044) 2436 3137.
769 Spencer Plaza,
Anna Salai.
Tel *(044) 2849 5817.*

Rani Arts & Crafts
8 Nowrojee Rd, Chetpet.
Tel *(044) 2642 2948.*
73 Gangadareswar Koil St.
Tel *(044) 2642 2948.*

Sukhra
42 North Mada St,
Mylapore.
Tel *(044) 2461 0193.*

Vummidi Bangaru Jewellers
Rani Seethai Hall,
603 Anna Salai.
Tel *(044) 2849 3056.*

TEXTILES AND SARIS

Co-optex
Pantheon Rd, Egmore.
Tel *(044) 2819 2394.*

Fabindia
Illford House, 3 Woods Rd,
off Anna Salai.
Tel *(044) 2851 0395.*

Kumaran Silks
12 Nageswaran Rd,
T Nagar.
Tel *(044) 2434 3544.*

Man Mandir
15 Khader Nawaz Khan
Rd, Nungamabakkam.
Tel *(044) 2823 9474.*

Nalli's
9 Nageswaran Rd,
T Nagar.
Tel *(044) 2434 4115.*

Radha Silks
Sannathi St, Mylapore.
Tel *(044) 2494 1906.*

Shilpi
1 GG Minar, 23 College
Rd, Nungambakkam.
Tel *(044) 2828 2603.*
29, CP Ramaswamy Rd.
Tel *(044) 2499 7526.*

Sundari Silks
54–55 North Usman Rd,
T Nagar.
Tel *(044) 2814 3093.*

HANDICRAFTS AND GIFTS

Apparao Galleries
7 Wallace Garden, 3rd St.
Tel *(044) 2833 4955.*

Cane and Bamboo
20 C-in-C Rd, Ethiraj Lane.
Tel *(044) 2827 5180.*

Higginbotham's
116 Anna Salai.
Tel *(044) 2841 3146.*

Musee Musicals
67 Anna Salai.
Tel *(044) 2852 2780.*

Music World
Spencer's Plaza.
Tel *(044) 2849 3232.*

Naturally Auroville
30 Khader Nawaz Khan
Rd, Nungambakkam.
Tel *(044) 2821 7517.*

Poompuhar
818 Anna Salai.
Tel *(044) 2852 0624.*

Sapthaswara Music Store
165 Royapetta H Rd,
Mylapore.
Tel *(044) 2499 3294.*

VTI
New 180, Anna Salai.
Tel *(044) 2858 6779.*

ENTERTAINMENT VENUES

Kalakshetra
Kalakshetra Foundation,
Thiruvanmiyur.
Tel *(044) 2491 1844.*

Karthik Fine Arts
New 39, Bhimanna
Garden St, Alwarpet.
Tel *(044) 2499 7788.*

Museum Theatre
Pantheon Rd, Egmore.
Tel *(044) 2819 3778.*

Music Academy
306 TTK Rd, Alwarpet.
Tel *(044) 2811 5162.*

Narada Gana Sabha
314 TTK Rd, Alwarpet.
Tel *(044) 2499 3201.*

Sri Krishna Gana Sabha
8 Maharajapuram
Santhanam Salai,
T Nagar.
Tel *(044) 2814 0806.*

CINEMA

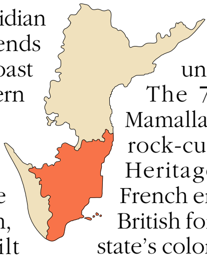
Devi
47 Anna Salai.
Tel *(044) 2855 5660.*

Ega
435 Poonamallee High Rd.
Tel *(044) 2641 1666.*

Gaiety
Anna Salai.
Tel *(044) 2841 5154.*

Sathyam Cineplex
Sathyam Theatre Complex,
8, Thiru Vi Ka Rd.
Tel *(044) 2852 3813.*

TAMIL NADU



The cradle of ancient Dravidian culture, Tamil Nadu extends from the Coromandel Coast in the east to the forested Western Ghats in the west. At its heart is the fertile Kaveri valley, a land of rice fields and spectacular temples. This is the site of ancient Cholamandalam, where the Chola kings built magnificent temples at Thanjavur and elsewhere. Great temples also stand at Madurai and Chidambaram, which witnessed an efflorescence of dance, music and literature under their enlightened rulers. The 7th-century port-city of Mamallapuram with its spectacular rock-cut temples is now a World Heritage Site, while the former French enclave of Pondicherry, and British forts and churches reflect the state's colonial history. Many towns in Tamil Nadu have the prefix "Tiru", which means sacred, and indicates the presence of a major religious site.

SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

Towns, Cities & Districts
Chettinad ㉓
Coimbatore ⑲
Pondicherry ⑦
Ramanathapuram ㉔
Tiruchirapalli ⑭
Tuticorin ㉖
Vellore ④

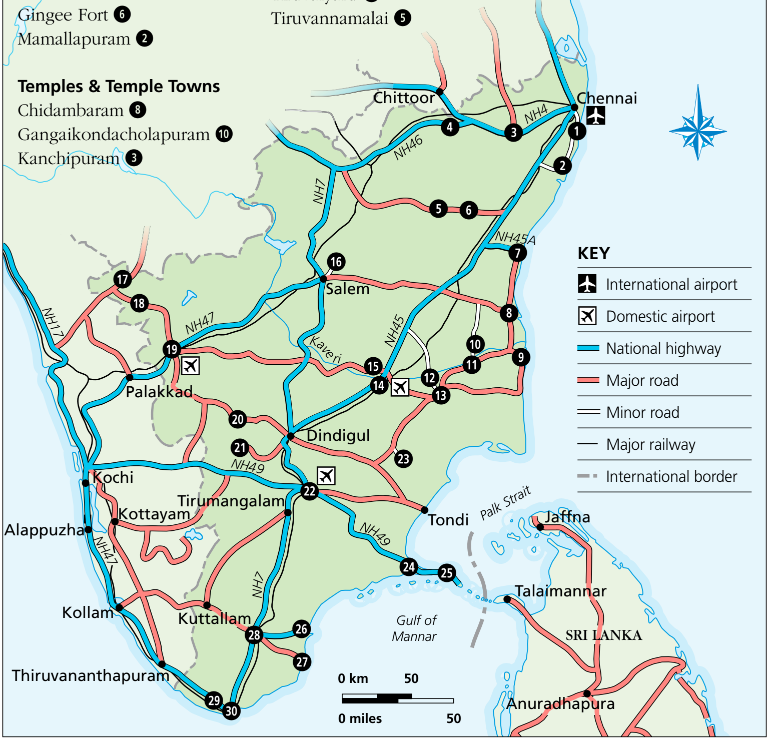
Historic Sites
Dakshina Chitra ①
Gingee Fort ⑥
Mamallapuram ②

Temples & Temple Towns
Chidambaram ⑧
Gangaikondacholapuram ⑩
Kanchipuram ③
Kanniyakumari ㉚
Kumbakonam ⑪
Madurai ㉒
Palani ⑳
Rameshvaram ㉕
Srirangam ⑮
Suchindram ㉙
Thanjavur ⑬
Tiruchendur ㉗
Tirunelveli ㉘
Tiruvaiyaru ⑫
Tiruvannamalai ⑤

Tours
Coromandel Driving Tour ⑨
Tour of the Nilgiris ⑱

National Parks
Mudumalai Wildlife
Sanctuary ⑰

Hill Stations
Kodaikanal ㉑
Yercaud ⑯


Chittoor
Chennai
NH4
NH46
NH7
NH45A
Salem
NH47
NH45
Kaveri
NH17
Palakkad
Dindigul
NH49
Kochi
Tirumangalam
Kottayam
Alappuzha
NH47
NH7
NH49
Tondi
Palk Strait
Jaffna
Talaimannar
SRI LANKA
Gulf of Mannar
Kollam
Kuttallam
Thiruvananthapuram
Anuradhapura
0 km 50
0 miles 50
KEY
International airport
Domestic airport
National highway
Major road
Minor road
Major railway
International border

◁ **Detail from a temple *gopura* with colourful stucco figures, Sarangapani Temple, Kumbakonam**

Dakshina Chitra ❶

Chingleput district. 26 km (16 miles) S of Chennai. 🚌 ***Tel*** *(04114) 272 603.* ○ *Wed–Mon.* 💰 👉 🍴 🛍

This heritage village, on the Coromandel Coast, provides a fascinating glimpse into the homes and lifestyles of the people of South India. The village features reconstructions of traditional houses, including, so far, six from Tamil Nadu, three from Kerala and one from Karnataka. The handsome Chettiar mansion *(see p612)* on view, with its elaborately carved wooden door, reflects the wealth of the Chettiar merchant community, while the homes of priests, farmers, weavers and potters are simple, utilitarian yet elegant structures. Within the complex is an Ayyanar shrine *(see p605)* and an open courtyard, where folk and classical dance performances and craft demonstrations are held.

Environs

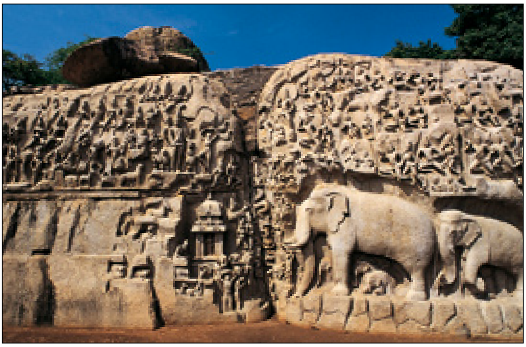
Cholamandal Village, 12 km (7 miles) north of Dakshina Chitra, is an artists' village established in 1966 and the first of its kind in India. For nature lovers, the **Crocodile Bank**, founded by an American zoologist, Romulus Whitaker, is 15 km (9 miles) south of the village. It includes a snake farm anda cooperative of Irulas, a community of rat-catchers.

🏛 Cholamandal Village
Tel *(044) 2449 0092.* ○ *daily.*

🏛 Crocodile Bank
○ *Wed-Mon.* 💰 📷 *extra charges.*

CROCODILE BANK
CENTRE FOR HERPETOLOGY
COOL

A colourful sign announcing the entrance to the Crocodile Bank

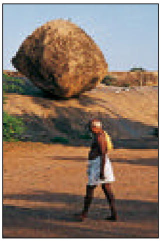


The sculpted relief at Mamallapuram, depicting Bhagiratha's Penance

Mamallapuram ❷

Kanchipuram district. 58 km (36 miles) S of Chennai. 🚌 ℹ *Covelong Rd, (04114) 242 232.* ○ *daily.* 👉 🛍 🍴 🎏 *Dance Festival (Jan/Feb).*

The Unesco World Heritage Site of Mamallapuram (or Mahabalipuram) was once a major port-city, built in the 7th century by the Pallava king, Narasimha Varman I, also known as Mamalla, the "Great Wrestler". This spectacular site, situated on the Bay of Bengal, extends across a boulder-strewn landscape and comprises rock-cut caves and monolithic shrines *(see pp580–81)*, structural temples and huge bas-reliefs that are considered the greatest examples of Pallava art. The stone-carving tradition that created these wonders is still alive in the many workshops scattered around the village.



Krishna's Butter Ball, a natural boulder

The spectacular **Shore Temple**, perched dramatically on a promontory by the sea, has survived the ravages of time and erosion. It was built by Mamalla for Vishnu, while the two Shiva shrines were added by Mamalla's successor Narasimha Varman II. The temple has a low boundary wall, with rows of seated Nandis surrounding it. Placed inside are a reclining Vishnu, a 16-faceted polished linga and reliefs of Somaskanda – a composite form of Shiva with his consort, Parvati and sons, Skanda and Ganesha.

Inland from the Shore Temple, in the village centre, is the celebrated bas-relief **Bhagiratha's Penance**, also known as Arjuna's Penance or the Descent of the Ganges. Carved on an immense rock with a natural vertical cleft, symbolizing the Ganges, the panel depicts in great detail the story of the sacred river's descent from the sky *(see p163)*. This divine act, made possible by the penance of the sage Bhagiratha, is witnessed on the panel by celestial and semi-celestial beings, ascetics, and animals. The symbolism is best understood during the monsoon, when rainwater flows down the cleft and collects in the tank below. Nearby are the unfinished **Panch Pandava Cave Temple**, and **Krishna's Butter Ball**, a natural boulder perched precariously on a slope.

South of Bhagiratha's Penance is the **Krishna Mandapa**, a huge bas-relief showing the god lifting Mount Govardhan to protect the people from torrential rains, as well as performing his tasks as a cowherd. The **Olakkanatha Temple**, above the *mandapa*, was once used as a lighthouse.

On the ridge southwest of Bhagiratha's Penance are three cave temples. The **Mahishasuramardini Cave**

Temple has a graceful portrayal of Goddess Durga on her lion mount, subduing the buffalo-headed demon, Mahisha, on the northern wall. This panel seems to emanate life and motion, in contrast to the one on the southern wall, where Vishnu reclines in deep meditation before creating the earth.

Nearby, the **Adivaraha Cave Temple** has interesting panels of Pallava rulers with their consorts. The Lion Throne, on top of a hill further west, is a raised platform with a seated lion, discovered near the piles of brick rubble thought to be the remains of the palace of the Pallavas.

The **Trimurti Cave Temple**, northwest of Bhagiratha's Penance, is dedicated to three gods – Shiva, Vishnu and Somaskanda. The shrines are guarded by statues of graceful doorkeepers. A sculpture of Durga standing on Mahisha's head is on an outer wall. To its south, the **Varaha Cave Temple** has beautifully moulded lion pillars, while the relief sculptures of Lakshmi, Durga and Varaha, the boar incarnation of Vishnu, are among the masterpieces of Pallava art. The two-storeyed, rectangular **Ganesha Ratha**, further south, is attributed to Parameshvara Varman I (r.669–90). The temple, originally dedicated to Shiva, has beautifully carved inscriptions listing the royal titles of Parameshvara Varman.

A small **Archaeological Museum**, with sculptures and fragments excavated from the site, lies to its east.

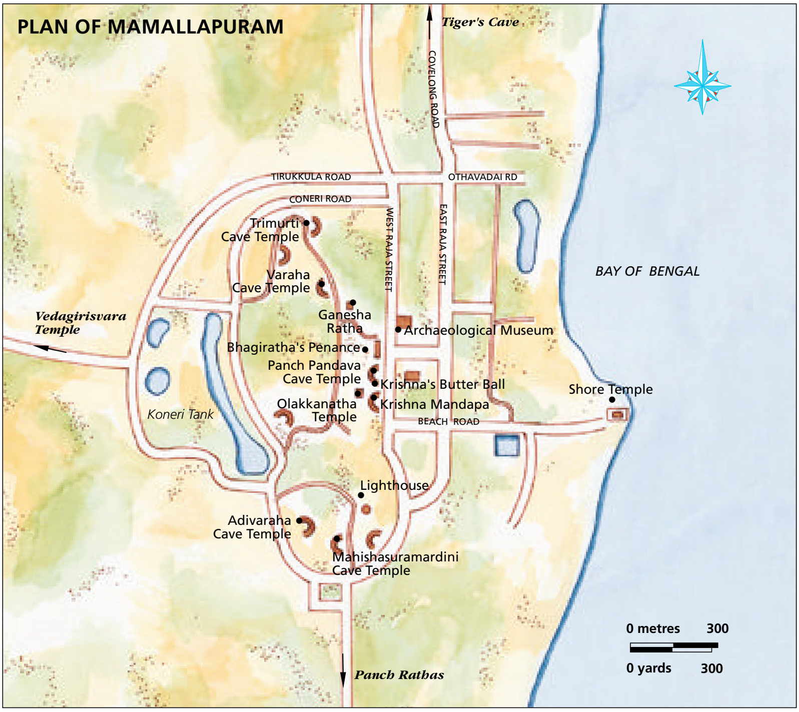
Archaeological Museum
West Raja St. ○ *daily.* ▨ **Shore Temple** ▨ *also covers Panch Rathas.*

Environs

The **Tiger's Cave**, 4 km (2.5 miles) north, is a shallow cave framed by a large boulder, with heads of *yalis* (mythical leonine beasts). It was probably a stage for outdoor performances.

The Vedagirisvara Temple, dedicated to Shiva, at the top of a hill in the village of **Thirukkazhukunran**, 17 km (11 miles) west, is famous for the two eagles that swoop down at noon to be fed by the temple priests. According to legend, these birds are saints who fly from Varanasi *(see pp202–208)* to Rameshvaram, stopping here to rest.

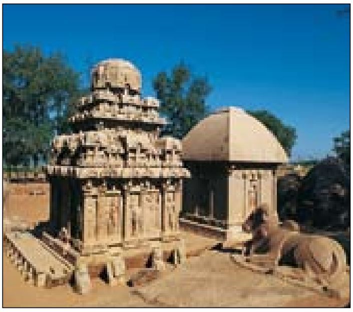
Fishermen with their boats on the beach at Mamallapuram


PLAN OF MAMALLAPURAM
Tiger's Cave
COVELONG ROAD
TIRUKKULA ROAD
OTHAVADAI RD
CONERI ROAD
WEST RAJA STREET
EAST RAJA STREET
Trimurti Cave Temple
Varaha Cave Temple
Ganesha Ratha
Archaeological Museum
BAY OF BENGAL
Vedagirisvara Temple
Bhagiratha's Penance
Panch Pandava Cave Temple
Krishna's Butter Ball
Krishna Mandapa
Shore Temple
Olakkanatha Temple
BEACH ROAD
Koneri Tank
Lighthouse
Adivaraha Cave Temple
Mahishasuramardini Cave Temple
Panch Rathas
0 metres 300
0 yards 300

Mamallapuram: Panch Rathas

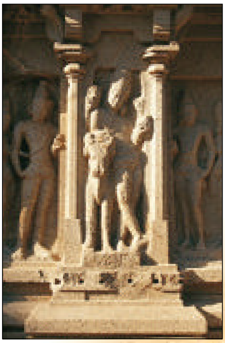
Sculpture of Subramanya

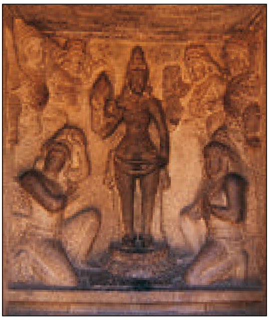
This 7th-century complex of monolithic rock-cut shrines called the Panch (five) Rathas (processional temple chariots) is named after the five Pandava brothers, heroes of the epic *Mahabharata (see p26)*, and their queen Draupadi. Although unfinished, these impressive temples are a tribute to the genius of the stone-cutters who carved these large boulders *in situ*. In an ambitious experiment, the styles and techniques of wooden architecture were imitated in stone, to create a variety of forms that later came to influence South Indian temple design.



Arjuna Ratha, Draupadi Ratha and Nandi

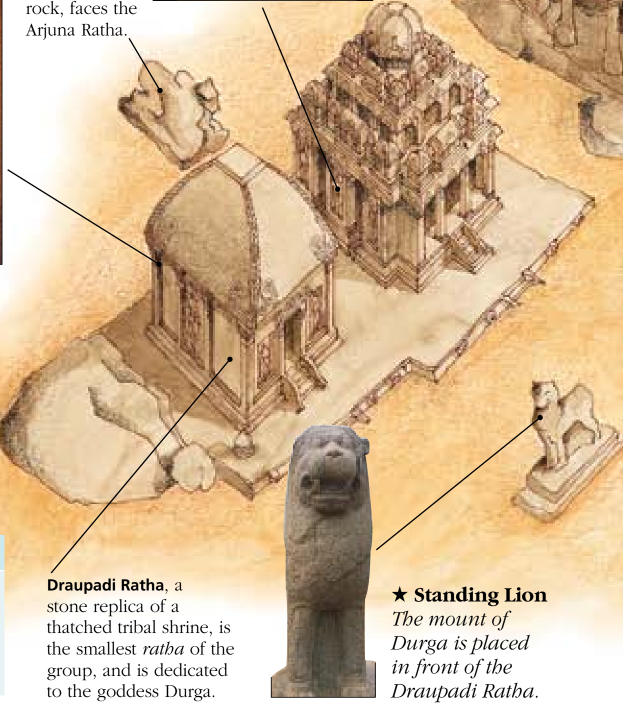
Arjuna Ratha
This two-storeyed temple has a graceful portrayal of Shiva leaning on his mount, the bull Nandi. Royal couples and other elegantly carved figures in the niches embellish the outer walls.





★ Durga Panel
A four-armed Durga is carved on the rear wall of the Draupadi Ratha's sanctum, with kneeling devotees in front. One of these is shown in the process of cutting his head off, as a supreme act of self-sacrifice.

Nandi, carved out of a single rock, faces the Arjuna Ratha.



Draupadi Ratha, a stone replica of a thatched tribal shrine, is the smallest *ratha* of the group, and is dedicated to the goddess Durga.

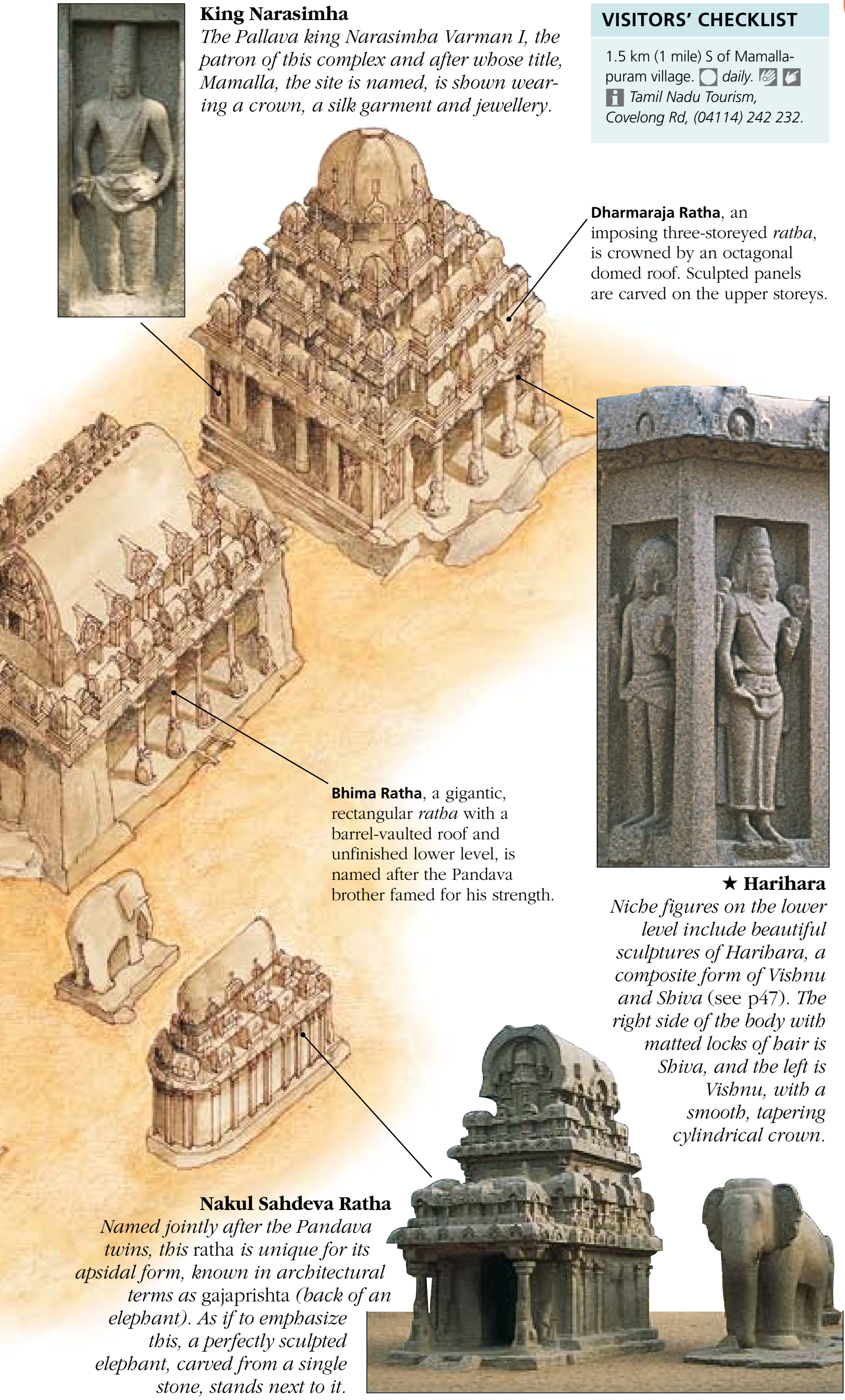
★ Standing Lion
The mount of Durga is placed in front of the Draupadi Ratha.

STAR FEATURES

- ★ Durga Panel
- ★ Standing Lion
- ★ Harihara

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

1.5 km (1 mile) S of Mamallapuram village. ○ *daily.*
ℹ *Tamil Nadu Tourism, Covelong Rd, (04114) 242 232.*



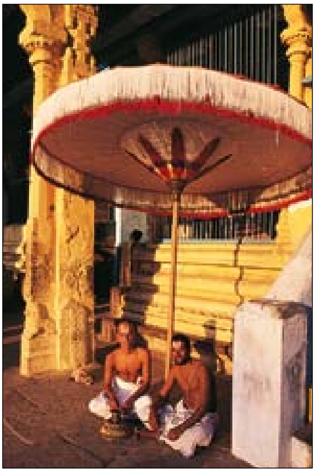
King Narasimha
The Pallava king Narasimha Varman I, the patron of this complex and after whose title, Mamalla, the site is named, is shown wearing a crown, a silk garment and jewellery.

Dharmaraja Ratha, an imposing three-storeyed *ratha*, is crowned by an octagonal domed roof. Sculpted panels are carved on the upper storeys.

Bhima Ratha, a gigantic, rectangular *ratha* with a barrel-vaulted roof and unfinished lower level, is named after the Pandava brother famed for his strength.

★ Harihara
Niche figures on the lower level include beautiful sculptures of Harihara, a composite form of Vishnu and Shiva (see p47). *The right side of the body with matted locks of hair is Shiva, and the left is Vishnu, with a smooth, tapering cylindrical crown.*

Nakul Sahdeva Ratha
Named jointly after the Pandava twins, this ratha *is unique for its apsidal form, known in architectural terms as* gajaprishta *(back of an elephant). As if to emphasize this, a perfectly sculpted elephant, carved from a single stone, stands next to it.*



Vaishnavite priests, Varadaraja Temple

Kanchipuram ❸

Kanchipuram district. 76 km (47 miles) SW of Chennai. 👥 *153,000.* 🚉 🚌 ℹ *Hotel Tamil Nadu, 78, Kamakshi Amman Sannathi St, (04112) 222 552.* 🎉 *Shivratri (Feb/Mar), Panguni Uthiram Festival (Mar/Apr), Brahmotsava (May/Jun).*

The small temple town of Kanchipuram, or Kanchi, as it is popularly known, is one of the seven sacred cities of the Hindus. From the 6th to the 8th centuries, it was the capital of the Pallavas *(see p578)*, who built numerous temples here and founded universities for higher learning. Royal patronage from the succeeding Chola, Pandya and Vijayanagar dynasties further consolidated the city's reputation as a religious and commercial centre.

Kanchipuram is sacred to Shaivites (devotees of Shiva) as well as to Vaishnavites (worshippers of Vishnu).The town is thus divided into two distinct zones, with the Shaivite temples to the north and the Vaishnavite temples to the southeast.

It also has an important Devi (goddess) temple, the **Kamakshi Temple**, situated northeast of the bus stand. Dedicated to Kamakshi, or the "loving-eyed" Parvati, the temple was rebuilt in the 14th century, during the Vijayanagar period. It has four colourful *gopuras* and the main sanctum has a gold-plated roof. The **Kailasanatha Temple**, to the west of the bus stand, is the oldest and grandest structure in the town. Built in the early 8th century by Rajasimha, the last great Pallava king, this Shiva temple is surrounded by 58 smaller shrines, each with splendid carvings of the various representations of Shiva. The recently discovered frescoes here are the earliest in South India. The sanctum has a circumambulatory passage with great symbolic meaning – seven steps (indicating seven births) lead to a dark passage (indicating the journey of life) and a narrow outlet (indicating death).

The great **Ekambareshvara Temple** on Car Street, constructed originally by the Pallavas, has a 16-pillared *mandapa* in front of it, that was added later by the Vijayanagar kings. This is one of the five *panchalinga* shrines *(see p584)* and houses a linga made of earth *(prithvi)*. Legend says that the goddess Kamakshi, as part of her penance for disturbing Shiva's meditation, created this linga with earth taken from under a mango tree. Lingas abound in the corridors of the temple complex, while on the western side of the shrine stands the sacred mango tree, said to be 3,000 years old. The **Vaikuntha Perumal Temple**, near the railway station, is one of the 18 temples dedicated to Vishnu. Erected by the Pallava king Nandi Varman II (r.731–96), this unique structure has three main sanctums, built one on top of the other. Each of them enshrines an image of Vishnu in a different form – standing, sitting and reclining. The hall in the lower shrine has panels depicting the genealogy, coronations and martial conquests of the Pallava kings.

The **Varadaraja Temple**, on Gandhi Road, is the town's main Vishnu temple. The chief deity is a form of Vishnu known as Varadaraja (the "King who Bestows Benediction"). It is believed that the temple stands on the site where Brahma performed a *yagna* (sacrifice) to invoke Vishnu's presence. Among the temple's jewels is a valuable gold necklace, said to have been presented by Robert Clive *(see p561)*.

Kanchipuram, famous for its silk, is also the seat of one of the four Shankaracharyas. They belong to the long line of head priests of the *matha* (religious centre) founded by the much-respected 9th-century philosopher-saint Adi Shankaracharya *(see p648)*.

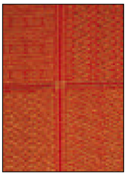
Environs

The bird sanctuary of **Vedanthangal**, 30 km (19 miles) southeast, attracts more than 30,000 migratory birds. Species such as cormorants, egrets, white ibis, and grey wagtails can be seen between October and February. The sanctuary has been looked after by locals for well over 250 years.

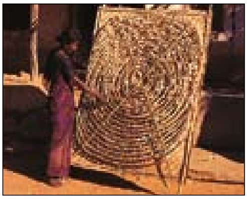
View of Kailasanatha, Kanchipuram's oldest temple

Kanchipuram Silk

Initially, Kanchipuram was a weaving and trade centre for cotton textiles. But from the 19th century, with the increase in availability of mulberry silk from neighbouring Karnataka, the craftsmen turned entirely to silk weaving. Today, the silk fabric and saris created by the city's weavers and dyers are ritually offered to the gods before being sold. Kanchipuram silks, an essential part of every Indian bride's trousseau, are renowned for their lustre, and for their elegant combination of contrasting colours on the borders and end pieces *(pallavs)*.

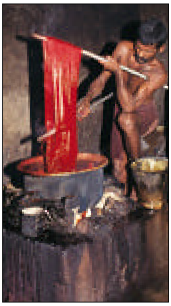


Kanchipuram sari patterns

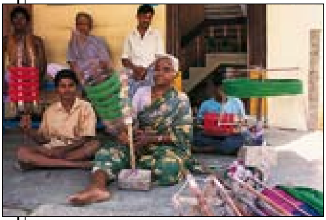


Cocoons *of the silkworm* (Bombyx mori) *are reared on bamboo frames before being dropped into boiling water to preserve the length of the fibre.*

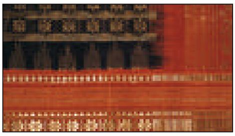
Yarn being sorted and graded before dyeing



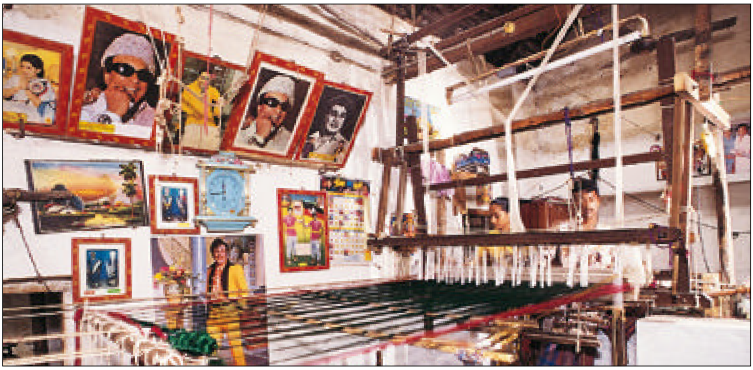
Dyeing *is done by a special community which is skilled in this technique. The dyer first dips the yarn into a cauldron of colour and then dries the banks in the sun.*



Warp and weft yarns *are prepared by family members. More than 5,000 families are involved in this very lucrative handloom industry.*



Classic Kanchipuram saris *are woven from twisted yarn, which makes them extremely durable. They are embellished with motifs such as temple spires, holy* rudraksha *beads, lotus flowers and peacocks, often woven in gold thread.*



Weavers' dwellings *are simple structures built around a courtyard, and serve as both a home and a work place. The loom is the main feature and occupies a large portion of the living area. Weaving skills are passed from generation to generation within families.*

Vellore ❹

Vellore district. 145 km (90 miles) W of Chennai. 👥 *177,500.* 🚆 *Katpadi, 5 km (3 miles) N of town centre, then bus or auto.* 🚌 ◓ *daily.*

Surrounded by a deep artificial moat, the 16th-century **Vellore Fort** dominates the heart of this town. An impressive example of military architecture, the fort has a turbulent history. This formidable structure has withstood many battles, including an ill-fated mutiny led by the son of Tipu Sultan *(see p517)* in 1806 against the British East India Company. Today, part of the fort houses some government offices, including the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), district courts and a prison. A museum within has a small but good collection of historical objects found in the area.

The only major structure to survive in the fort is the magnificent **Jalakanteshvara Temple**, constructed by the Nayakas, governors of the region under the Vijayanagar kings, in the mid-16th century. This Shiva temple is located near the fort's northern wall. It is surrounded by a low-lying boundary wall and contains a tank and subsidiary shrines. In the early 20th century, the temple was used as a garrison and its linga was removed from the sanctum. This was reinstated in 1981, after which worship recommenced. In the outer courtyard is the ornate Kalyana Mandapa. Its pillars are carved with magnificent horses and *yali* riders.

The broad moat surrounding the quadrangular Vellore Fort

Vellore is renowned for its prestigious Christian Medical College, set up in 1900 by the American Dr Ida Scudder. This instiution specializes in research on tropical diseases.

🏰 **Vellore Fort**
○ *daily.* **Museum** ○ *Sat-Thu.* ● *2nd Sat of every month.*
Jalakanteshvara Temple ○ *daily.*
⊘ *inside the sanctum.*

Environs

Arcot, 27 km (17 miles) east of Vellore, is best known for its flamboyant nawabs *(see p570)* and their resistance to the British and French forces in the late 18th century. Some derelict tombs and a Jami Masjid are all that remain from that period.

Tiruvannamalai ❺

Tiruvannamalai district. 85 km (53 miles) S of Vellore. 🚆 🚌
🎉 *Karthigai Deepam (Nov/Dec).*

One of the most sacred cities of Tamil Nadu, this pilgrim town is the place where Shiva is believed to have appeared as a column of fire *(sthavara* linga*)* in order to assert his supremacy over Brahma and Vishnu. Arunachala Hill (the "Red Mountain"), which forms a backdrop to the town, is said to be the site where the fire manifested itself, and is thus perceived as the light of god himself. On the day of the Karthigai Deepam festival *(see p589)*, an enormous *deepa* (lamp), using 2,000 litres (528 gallons) of ghee and a 30-m (98-ft) wide wick, is lit on the hill, and burns for days. On a full moon night,

THE FIVE ELEMENTAL LINGAS

Hindu belief holds that five essential elements – air, water, fire, earth and ether – created man and the universe. Shiva, one of the three main gods of the Hindu Trinity, is represented as the embodiment of these five elements in five different places. At Sri Kalahasti in Andhra Pradesh *(see p680)*, he is represented as air; in Tiruvanaikka *(see p603)* he takes the form of water, so the linga (phallic symbol) in the main sanctum is partly immersed in water. At Tiruvannamalai, Shiva represents fire, while in the Ekambareshvara Temple at Kanchipuram *(see p582)*, the linga is made of earth. Finally, at Chidambaram *(see p590)* Shiva represents ether, the most sacred of the five elements.

Nataraja Temple, Chidambaram, housing the ether linga

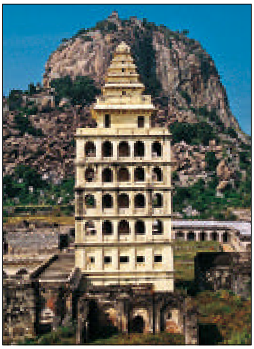
The 16th-century Arunachaleshvara Temple at Tiruvannamalai

pilgrims perform a 14-km (9-mile) long circumambulation on foot around the hill.

Arunachaleshvara Temple, the town's most important structure, is one of the five elemental shrines of Shiva, where the linga, encased in gold, represents fire. Covering a vast area of 10 ha (25 acres), this is also one of the largest temple complexes in India, parts of it dating to the 11th century. It has nine imposing towers, huge *prakaras* (walled and cloistered enclosures), the large Shivaganga Tank and a vast thousand-pillared hall.

Tiruvannamalai is also where Sri Ramana Maharishi, the famed 20th-century saint, spent 23 years in meditation. The **Sri Ramana Maharishi Ashram**, near Arunachala Hill, is an internationally renowned spiritual centre that attracts devotees from all walks of life.

Arunachaleshvara Temple
○ *daily.* ● *to non-Hindus.*
inside the sanctum.



Kalyana Mahal with Rajagiri Hill in the background, Gingee

The Krishna Temple and Durbar Hall on Krishnagiri Hill, Gingee Fort

Gingee Fort ❻

Viluppuram district. 37 km (23 miles) E of Tiruvannamalai. 🚌 ○ *daily.*

Gingee (locally called Senji) Fort, is a remarkable example of military engineering. Its three citadels, dramatically perched atop three hills – Krishnagiri to the north, Rajagiri to the west and Chandrayandurg to the south-east – are enclosed by solid stone walls to form a vast triangular-shaped area extending more than 1.5 km (1 mile) from north to south.

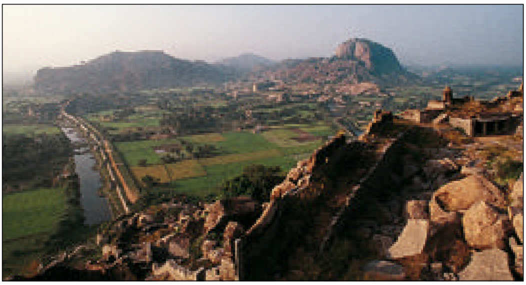
Built by the local Nayaka governors, feudatories of the Vijayanagar kings, in the 15th and 16th centuries, the fort was occupied by Bijapur's Adil Shahi Sultans *(see p542)*, the Marathas *(see p471)*, the French and finally the British.

This once-great fortress city is dotted with dilapidated arcaded chambers, mosques, *mandapas*, small shrines, tanks and granaries. Many temples, mostly dedicated to Vishnu, survive as well. These include the deserted temple in the main citadel on the 242-m (794-ft) high Rajagiri Hill. The most prominent, however, is the great **Venkataramana Temple**, in the foothills of the outer fort, near Pondicherry Gate. This was constructed by Muthialu Nayaka in the 17th century. Its original pillars were removed by the French and used in the Government Square at Pondicherry *(see p586)*. Near the gateway are panels depicting scenes from the *Ramayana (see p27)* and the *Vishnu Purana*.

A Ranganatha Temple and a Krishna Temple, both smaller than the Venkataramana Temple, are located on Krishnagiri Hill, as is the **Durbar Hall**. The Durbar Hall has balconies extending to the edge of the hill which provide good views of the surrounding countryside.

The fort's finest monument is the **Kalyana Mahal**, a square hall built for the ladies of the court. The building has a central eight-storeyed pyramidal tower with a single large room on each floor.

There are also traces of a network of natural springs and tanks that provided an excellent supply of water to the citadel. One of the tanks, Chettikulam, has a platform where Raja Thej Singh, a courageous 18th-century Rajput chief and vassal of the Mughal emperor, was cremated. Tamil folk songs glorify Gingee and Raja Thej Singh, who was killed in a heroic battle against the Nawab of Arcot.



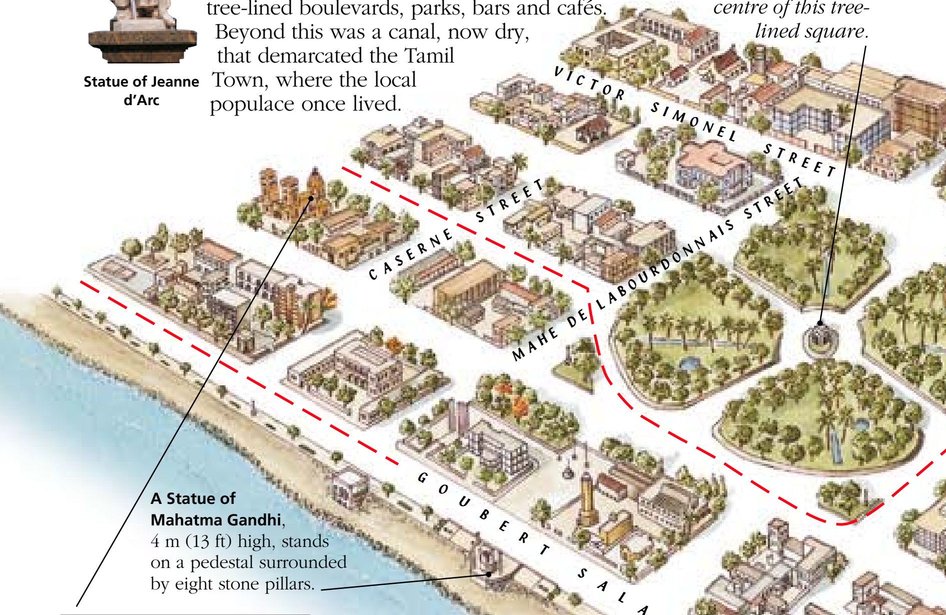
Gingee Fort sprawling across three hills

Street-by-Street: Pondicherry ❼

Statue of Jeanne d'Arc

The former capital of French territories in India, Pondicherry was established in 1674 by François Martin, the first director of the French East India Company. The town is laid out in a grid pattern, with parallel streets cutting across each other at right angles. Its main promenade, the 3-km (2-mile) long Goubert Salai running along the Bay of Bengal, formed part of the French Quarter, with its elegant colonial mansions, tree-lined boulevards, parks, bars and cafés. Beyond this was a canal, now dry, that demarcated the Tamil Town, where the local populace once lived.

Government Square
A pavilion stands in the centre of this tree-lined square.



A Statue of Mahatma Gandhi, 4 m (13 ft) high, stands on a pedestal surrounded by eight stone pillars.

★ Church of Our Lady of the Angels
Built in 1865, this striking church boasts a rare oil painting of Our Lady of the Assumption, a gift from the French emperor, Napoleon III.

Le Café, a popular restaurant on Goubert Salai.

STAR SIGHTS

- ★ Church of Our Lady of the Angels
- ★ Aurobindo Ashram
- ★ View of the Seafront

JOSEPH FRANÇOIS DUPLEIX

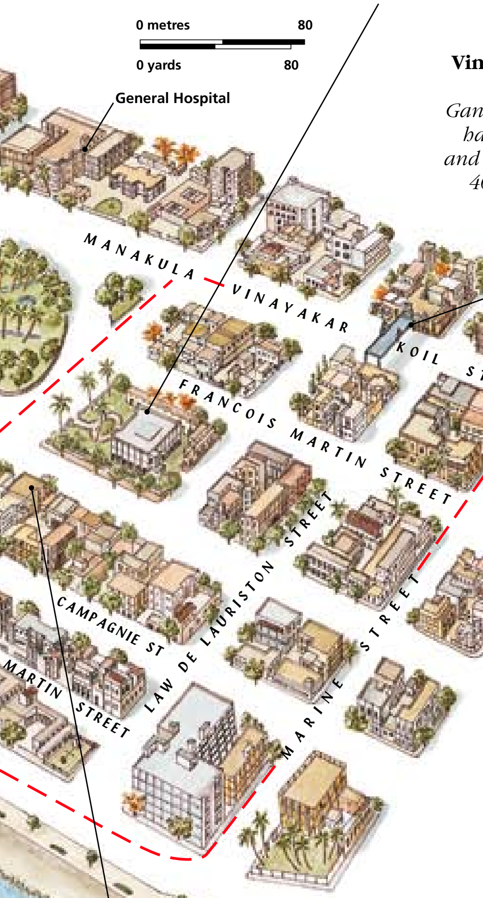
Pondicherry's colonial past is intricately interwoven with the life of the redoubtable Marquis Joseph François Dupleix, governor between 1742 and 1754. This energetic statesman tried valiantly to prevent British supremacy by forming alliances with local princes. This power struggle was aggravated by the War of Austrian Succession in Europe between England and France. With the final defeat of the French in the Second Carnatic War, Dupleix relinquished his governorship and returned in disgrace to Paris. His memorial statue is on Goubert Salai.

Dupleix (1697–1764)

Raj Nivas
A harmonious fusion of French and Indian styles of architecture, Dupleix's palatial home is now the Lieutenant Governor's official residence.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Union Territory of Pondicherry. 160 km (99 miles) S of Chennai. 👥 *220,800.* 🚉 🚌 ℹ *Pondicherry Tourism, Goubert Salai, (0413) 233 9497.* ✋ *Mon–Sat.* 🎉 *Masimagam (Feb/Mar), Ganesha Chaturthi (Aug/Sep).*


0 metres 80
0 yards 80
General Hospital
MANAKULA VINAYAKAR KOIL STREET
FRANCOIS MARTIN STREET
LAW DE LAURISTON STREET
MARINE STREET
CAMPAGNIE ST
MARTIN STREET
KEY
Suggested route

Manakula Vinayakar Temple
Dedicated to Ganesha, this temple has a golden spire, and walls portraying 40 different forms of Ganesha.

★ Aurobindo Ashram
Named after Sri Aurobindo (see p588), *this serene ashram organizes regular meditation sessions to which all are welcome.*

Pondicherry
Museum's collection ranges from ancient Roman artifacts and Chola bronzes to beautiful snail shells.

★ View of the Seafront
Goubert Salai, the boulevard along the Bay of Bengal, is lined with grand colonial buildings.

Exploring Pondicherry

A policeman wearing a kepi

Often described as a sleepy French provincial town, Pondicherry retains a distinct Gallic flavour. French is still spoken among the older residents, while stately colonial mansions stand in tree-lined streets that are still known by their colonial names. Even the policemen continue to wear the military-style caps, known as kepis. Today, Pondicherry, has been renamed Puduchcheri. Located on the east coast of Tamil Nadu, it is the administrative capital of a Union Territory that includes the former French enclaves of Mahe in Kerala *(see p655)*, Yanam in Andhra Pradesh and Karaikkal in Tamil Nadu.

Pondicherry Museum

49, Rue St Louis. ***Tel*** *Director Art & Culture (0413) 233 6236.* ○ *Tue–Sun.*

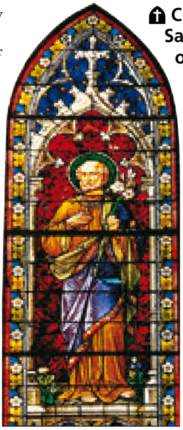
Located in the lovely old Law Building, near Government Park, the Pondicherry Museum has an outstanding collection of artifacts from the French colonial period. The rooms in one section are furnished in French style, and are decorated with marble statuary, paintings, mirrors and clocks. Prized exhibits include the bed that Dupleix slept in when he was the governor, and a *pousse-pousse*, an earlier version of the rickshaw.

The museum also displays rare bronzes and stone sculptures from the Pallava and Chola periods. Among the artifacts excavated from nearby Arikamedu, an ancient port that had trade links with Imperial Rome, are beads, amphorae, coins, ornamented oil lamps, funerary urns and fragments of pottery and china.

Inside the same compound is the **Romain Rolland Library**. Established in 1872, the library now has a rich collection of more than 300,000 volumes, including many rare editions in both French and English. Its mobile library service takes more than 8,000 books in a bus to nearby villages. The reference section, on the second floor, is open to the public.

Romain Rolland Library

Tel *(0413) 233 6426.* ○ *Mon-Sat.*



Stained glass, Church of the Sacred Heart

Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

South Boulevard. ○ *daily.*

A serene atmosphere cloaks this brown and white Neo-Gothic church, built in the 1700s. Its most interesting features are its large stained-glass panels depicting incidents from the life of Jesus Christ, and the handsome arches that span the nave. Further along the southern boulevard is the cemetery, which has tombs with ornate marble decorations.

Botanical Gardens

S of City Bus Stand.

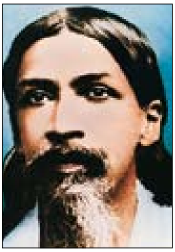
Lying at the far western end of the old Tamil Town, the Botanical Gardens, laid out in 1826, were designed in the formal French style with clipped trees, flower beds, gravel walks and fountains. The French introduced many unusual and exotic trees and shrubs from all over India and the world, many of which are still here. With its 1,500 species of plants, this is one of the best botanical gardens in South India. An interesting little aquarium displays some of the more spectacular marine species from the Coromandel Coast.

House of Ananda Rangapillai

Ananda Rangapillai St. ***Tel*** *(0413) 233 5756 for permission to visit.*

This lavishly furnished house, once the home of an 18th-century Indian nobleman, offers fascinating glimpses into a vanished lifestyle. Now a museum, the house was owned by Ananda Rangapillai, Dupleix's favourite courtier and *dubash* (trade agent). A perceptive observer and commentator, he maintained a series of diaries between 1736 and 1760, recording his views of the fluctuating fortunes of the French in India. However, he displeased Madame Dupleix, who eventually ousted him from his post.

SRI AUROBINDO GHOSE



Sri Aurobindo (1872–1950)

The firebrand Bengali poet-philosopher, Aurobindo Ghose, who joined the struggle for freedom in the early 1900s, was known for his extremist views. To escape from the British, he took refuge in the French territory of Pondicherry, where he was drawn into the spiritual realm. It was here that he studied, wrote about and popularized the principles of yoga. His disciple, Mirra Alfassa, known later as "The Mother", was a Parisian mystic, painter and musician, who first came to Pondicherry with her husband during World War I. Sri Aurobindo's philosophy so inspired her that she stayed on, and was later instrumental in the establishment of the Aurobindo Ashram.

The verdant courtyard of the École Française d'Extrême-Orient

École Française d'Extrême-Orient

16 & 19, Rue Dumas. ***Tel*** *(0413) 233 2504.*

An internationally renowned research institution, the 19th-century École Française d'Extrême-Orient is noted for its research in archaeology, history and sociology.

French Institute of Indology

11, St Louis St. ***Tel*** *(0413) 233 4539.*

The prestigious French Institute of Indology was established in the mid-1950s by an eminent French Indologist, Dr Jean Fillozet. Originally set up for the study of local language and culture, this institute now has links with many French universities and research organizations.

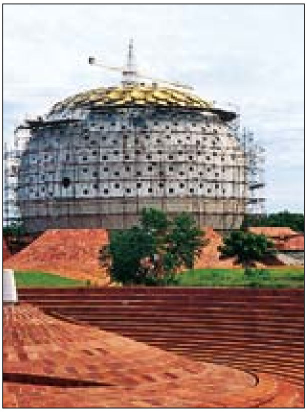
Aurobindo Ashram

Rue de la Marine. ***Tel*** *(0413) 223 3604.* ○ *daily.*

Pondicherry's best-known landmark, the Aurobindo Ashram dominates life in this town. Founded by Sri Aurobindo in 1926, the Ashram is a peaceful retreat with tree-shaded courtyards. The flower-festooned *samadhi* (memorial) of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother lies under a frangipani tree in the main courtyard. This memorial, with two chambers, one above the other, is the focal point for all disciples and followers.

Environs

Auroville, or the "City of Dawn", 8 km (5 miles) northwest of Pondicherry, was designed by French architect Roger Anger in 1968. Conceived as a utopian paradise by The Mother, Mirra Alfassa, it was planned as a futuristic international city, where people of goodwill would live together in peace. The International Commune, with 40 settlements with names like Grace, Serenity and Certitude, and 550 permanent residents, was meant to bring people from different castes, religions and nations under one roof, where they could live in harmony. Two important settlements, Fraternité and Harmonie, sell handicrafts made by local artisans. The Matri Mandir, a meditation centre set in an area of 25 ha (62 acres), reflects The Mother's spiritual beliefs. This spherical marble chamber has a crystal placed inside it, reflecting the sun's rays. The concentrated light acts as a focal point to aid meditation.



Matri Mandir, the spiritual and physical centre of Auroville

FESTIVALS OF TAMIL NADU

Pongal *(mid-Jan)*. A thanksgiving festival in praise of the sun, land and cattle, Pongal is celebrated all over Tamil Nadu. A sweet rice pudding *(pongal)* is the main offering. The southern districts organize a bull fight, a popular martial event known as *manju virattal.*

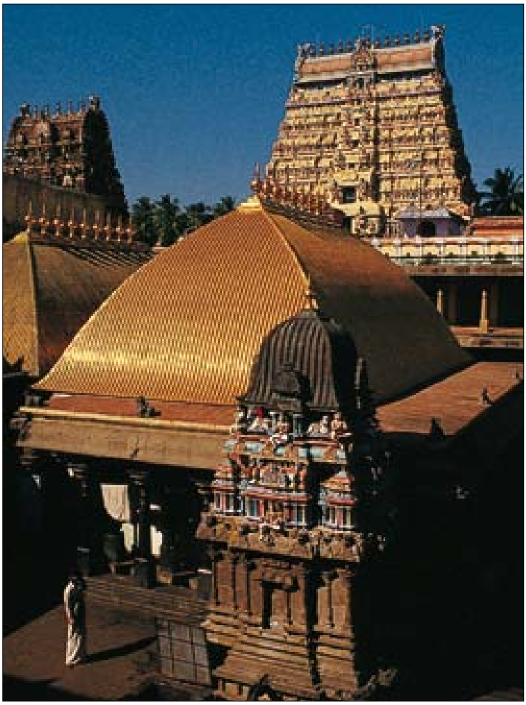
Chitirai *(mid-Apr)*. The Tamil New Year is celebrated all over the state with offerings of food to the gods. In Madurai, the marriage of Minakshi (Parvati) and Sundareshvara (Shiva) is celebrated with much pomp.

Adi Perukku *(Jul/Aug)*. Sweets and different kinds of rice preparations are offered to the rivers of Tamil Nadu to mark the onset of the monsoon.

Navaratri Gollu *(Sep/Oct)*. Exclusively for women, this nine-day festival marks the victory of Goddess Durga over the buffalo demon Mahisha. Houses are decorated with *gollu* dolls, which depict gods and goddesses, as well as with contemporary secular icons.

Karthigai *(Nov/Dec),* Tiruvannamalai. People decorate their homes with lights to celebrate the birth of Murugan, son of Shiva *(see p584)*.

Tamil women making preparations for Pongal



The gold-plated roof of the main sanctum, Nataraja Temple, Chidambaram

Chidambaram ❽

Thanjavur district. 60 km (37 miles) S of Pondicherry. *59,000.* 🚆 🚌 i *Hotel Tamil Nadu, Railway Feeder Rd, (04144) 238 739.* *Dance Festival (Feb/Mar), Arudhra (Dec/Jan).*

Sacred Chidambaram, where Shiva is believed to have performed his cosmic dance, the *tandava nritya*, is a traditional temple town where history merges with mythology to create a deeply religious ambience. All ancient Hindu beliefs and practices are zealously observed here, manifested in an endless cycle of rites and rituals.

The focal point of the town is the awe-inspiring **Nataraja Temple**, built by the Cholas *(see pp46–7)* in the 9th century to honour their patron deity, Shiva as Nataraja, the "Lord of Dance" *(see p566)*. The temple has an unusual hut-like sanctum with a gold-plated roof, the huge, colonnaded Shivaganga Tank, and four colourful *gopuras*. The most interesting is the eastern *gopura* which features detailed sculptures of the 108 hand and feet movements of Bharat Natyam *(see p29)*, and is considered a veritable encyclopaedia of this classical temple dance.

Within the temple's three enormous enclosures are five major halls *(sabhas)*, each conceived for a special purpose. In the outer enclosure, next to the Shivaganga Tank, is the Raja Sabha ("Royal Hall"), a beautiful thousand-pillared hall, built as a venue for temple rituals and festivals. Many Chola kings were crowned here in the presence of the deity. In the central enclosure is the Deva Sabha ("Divine Hall"), where the temple bronzes are housed, and administrative functions performed. The adjacent Nritya Sabha ("Dance Hall") has a superb collection of sculptures, the finest being the **Urdhava Tandava**. The innermost enclosure, the holiest part of the complex, contains the Chit Sabha or Chitambalam ("Hall of Bliss"), from which the town derives its name. This is the main sanctum, housing one of the five elemental lingas of Shiva *(see p584)*, the *akasha* linga, which represents ether, the all-pervading element central to human existence. The inner sanctum containing the linga is hidden behind a black curtain, symbolizing ignorance, which is removed only during prayer time. There is a certain aura of mystery to this veiled sanctum and it is often called the Sacred Secret of Chidambaram (Chidambara Rahasyam). Finally, the fifth hall, in front of the Chit Sabha, is the Kanaka Sabha ("Golden Hall"), where Shiva is supposed to have performed his cosmic dance.

Other areas of interest in the complex are the **Govindarajaswamy Shrine**, housing the reclining Vishnu, the **Shivakamasundari Shrine**, dedicated to Shiva's consort, Parvati, and the **Subramanyam Shrine**, in which Murugan is worshipped.

Religious traditions in the temple are preserved by a group of hereditary priests whose ancestors came to Chidambaram 3,000 years ago. Known as the *dikshitars*, they are easily recognized by their top-knots. Chidambaram's other claim to fame is the modern **Annamalai University**, which is located to the east. Founded by a philanthropist over 50 years ago, it is Tamil Nadu's first residential university, specializing in South Indian studies.

Urdhava Tandava, Nataraja Temple

Nataraja Temple

Near bus stand. ○ *daily.*

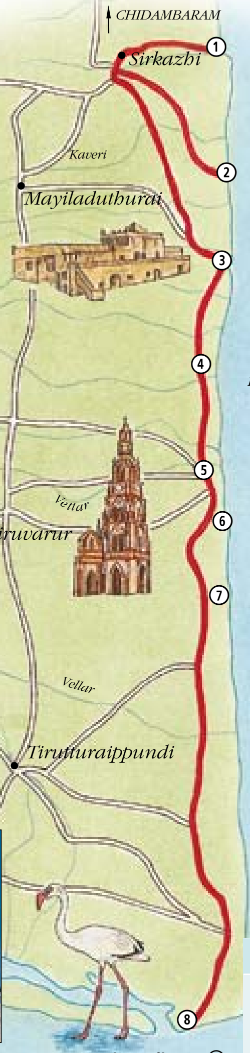
Environs

Located 16 km (10 miles) east of Chidambaram, **Pichavaram's** maze of picturesque backwaters, with mangrove forests and 1,700 islands in 4,000 canals, canbe explored in rowboats.

Coromandel Driving Tour ⑨

Named after Cholamandalam ("the Realm of the Cholas"), the Coromandel Coast extends from the Godavari Delta in Andhra Pradesh in the north, to Point Calimere in the south. This spectacularly beautiful strip of land played a significant role in the maritime history of India. Its great ports have, through the ages, attracted traders and merchants in search of textiles and spices.

Dansborg Fort at Tarangambadi

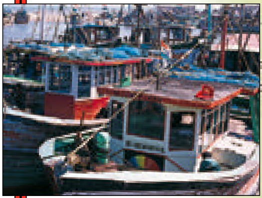


Tirumullaivasal ①
A magnificent shrine to Shiva dominates this small, coastal town.

Poompuhar ②
This historic port city once had trade links with ancient Greece and Rome. An interesting museum here recreates stories of its past glory in bas-reliefs.

Tarangambadi ③
More popularly known as Tranquebar, this little town was a Danish settlement in the 17th century. It has an impressive fort, churches and a beautiful brick gateway, the Town Gate.

Karaikal ④
This former French town has many 19th-century mansions and a Neo-Gothic church.



Nagapattinam ⑥
An old Chola port, this was also a major Buddhist centre till the 13th century. It was later occupied by the Portuguese, the Dutch and finally the British.

Nagore ⑤
The 16th-century tomb of Hazrat Sayyid Shahul, a Muslim saint who died in Nagore, attracts devotees of all religions, castes and creeds.

Velanganni ⑦
People of all religions seek cures at the Neo-Gothic Basilica of Our Lady of Good Health.

Point Calimere ⑧
This wildlife sanctuary spread over 20,000 ha (49,421 acres) of saline marshland is a haven for migratory birds.

TIPS FOR DRIVERS

Length: *90 km (56 miles).*
Stopping-off points: *Hotel Tamil Nadu at both Poompuhar and Nagapattinam are convenient stopping-off points. The route is well connected by government and private buses.*

The superb Nataraja sculpture at Gangaikondacholapuram

Gangaikondacholapuram ⑩

Tiruchirapalli district. 40 km (25 miles) SW of Chidambaram. 🚌 *from Chidambaram or Kumbakonam.*

Grandly titled Gangaikondacholapuram, "The City of the Chola who Took the Ganges", this now modest village was the capital of the powerful Chola dynasty *(see pp46–7)* during the reign of Rajendra I (r.1012–44). A great military commander like his father Rajaraja I, Rajendra I was the first Tamil ruler to venture northwards. He built this city to commemorate his successful campaign across the Ganges. According to an inscription, he then ordered the defeated rulers to carry back pots of sacred Ganges water on their heads to fill the Chola-Ganga tank, a victory memorial.

Except for the magnificent **Brihadishvara Temple**, little remains of his capital city. Built as a replica of Thanjavur's Brihadishvara Temple *(see pp598–9)*, the towered sanctum of this granite Shiva temple is shorter than the one at Thanjavur. Adorning the lower walls, columns and niches are many remarkable sculptural friezes. One of the most outstanding is the panel depicting Shiva blessing Chandesha, a pious devotee sculpted to resemble Rajendra I himself. The sculptures of the *dikpalas* (guardians of the eight directions), *ekadasas* (the 11 forms of Shiva), Saraswati, Kalyanasundara and Nataraja *(see p566)* are also splendid examples of Chola art. Steps near the small Durga shrine in the courtyard lead past a sculpture of a seated lion to a well, believed to have been filled with Ganges water for daily rituals.

The small **Archaeological Museum**, near the temple, exhibits Chola artifacts from neighbouring sites.

🛕 **Brihadishvara Temple**
○ *daily.* **Museum** ○ *Sat-Thu.*

Kumbakonam ⑪

Thanjavur district. 74 km (46 miles) SW of Chidambaram. 👥 *140,100.*
🚆 🚌 ℹ *Thanjavur tourist office, (04362) 231 325.* 🎪 *Nageshvara Temple Festival (Apr/May), Mahamaham Festival (every 12 years).*

Like Kanchipuram *(see p582)*, Kumbakonam is one of the most sacred cities in Tamil Nadu. Located on the southern bank of the Kaveri river, this is an ancient city where, as legend says, Shiva's arrow shattered the cosmic pot *(kumbh)* containing the divine nectar of creation *(amrit)*. This myth has given Kumbakonam both its name and sanctity. Today, the city represents the traditional cultural values of the Tamil heartland. It is also the region's main commercial and craft centre, famous for its textiles, jewellery, bronze casting and the superior quality of its locally grown betel leaves.

It is believed that when the divine nectar emerged from the pot, it filled the huge **Mahamaham Tank**. This is Kumbakonam's sacred centre and the site of the great Mahamaham Festival, held every 12 years (the last one was held in 2004). At the

The 17th-century Adikumbheshvara Temple, Kumbakonam auspicious time, thousands of devotees enter the tank for their holy dip. This is when the purifying power of the water is said to be at its height. The devout believe that all of India's nine sacred rivers (Ganges, Yamuna, Saraswati, Sarayu, Godavari, Narmada, Kaveri, Payokshini and Kanniyakumari) also bathe in the tank to cleanse themselves of the sins of humanity accumulated in their waters.

The tank, renovated by the Nayakas in the 17th century, has steps at the four cardinal points, and 16 ornate pavilions in honour of the 16 *mahadanas* (great gifts bestowed by a ruler on a spiritual centre). A fine example of Nayaka art is a relief depicting a king being weighed on a balance against gold (a ceremony known as *tulapurushadeva*), carved on the roof of a 16-pillared *mandapa* that stands at the northwest corner of the tank. To the north is the **Kashivishvanatha Temple**, which has a small shrine facing the water; this is dedicated to the nine sacred rivers, personified as goddesses. The shrine representing the Kaveri river occupies the central position.

To the east of the tank is the 17th-century **Adikumbheshvara Temple**, built on the legendary spot where Shiva shattered the pot. A unique feature here is the depiction of 27 stars and the 12 zodiac signs carved on a large block of stone in the Navaratri Mandapa. It also has a superb collection of silver *vahanas* (vehicles) which are used during festivals to carry the temple deities. The grand, 12-storeyed **Sarangapani Temple**, to the east, is the most important Vaishnavite shrine in the city.

Nearby is the 9th-century **Nageshvara Temple**, a fine example of early Chola architecture. The town's oldest temple, this is the site of an annual festival that celebrates the worship of the linga by the sun. Niches on the sanctum walls contain exquisitely carved figures depicting the forms of Shiva, and scenes from the *Ramayana*.

Temple chariots at Kumbakonam's Adikumbheshvara Temple

Environs

The spectacular Airavateshvara Temple at **Darasuram**, 4 km (2.5 miles) west of Kumbakonam, was built by the Chola king, Rajaraja II (r.1146–73). This temple is dedicated to Shiva, who is known here as Airavateshvara, the "Lord of Airavata". Legend claims that after Airavata, the white elephant of Indra, the God of the Heavens, regained his lost colour, he worshipped Shiva at this spot.

Shiva's wedding procession, Darasuram

The four-tiered temple has a sanctum and three halls, of which the finest is the Rajagambira Mandapa, conceived as a stone chariot drawn by caparisoned horses, with Brahma as its driver. The outer walls have fine friezes and carvings of musicians, dancers and acrobats as well as depictions from the *Periya Puranam*, a Tamil treatise on the 63 Shaivite poet-saints, the Nayannars *(see p45)*.

The late Chola temple at **Tirubhuvanam**, 8 km (5 miles) northeast of Kumbakonam, is dedicated to Kumbheshvara, the "God who Removes Fear". This is also an old silk weaving centre. About 8 km (5 miles) west of Kumbakonam is **Swamimalai**, one of the six sacred shrines devoted to Lord Murugan *(see p25)*, who, legend says, propounded the meaning of "Om", the sacred mantra, to his father Shiva, and thus assumed the title Swaminatha ("Lord of Lords"). The temple, situated on a hill, has an impressive statue of Murugan in the sanctum; interestingly, he has an elephant as his vehicle instead of the typical peacock. This small village is also an important centre for bronze casting, where artisans still use traditional methods to create beautiful images for temples *(see p594)*.

Small votive shrines outside the Airavateshvara Temple, Darasuram

The College of Music at Tiruvaiyaru, on the Kaveri river

Tiruvaiyaru ⑫

Thanjavur district. 13 km (8 miles) N of Thanjavur. *14,500.* *Thyagaraja Music Festival (Jan).*

The fertile region watered by the Kaveri river and its four tributaries is known as Tiruvaiyaru, the sacred *(tiru)* land of five *(i)* rivers *(aru)*. For nearly 2,000 years the Tamil people have regarded the Kaveri as the sacred source of life, religion and culture. As a result, many scholars, artists, poets and musicians settled in this region, under the enlightened patronage of the rulers of Thanjavur *(see pp596–7)*. Among them was Thyagaraja (1767–1847), the greatest composer-saint of Carnatic music. The history of this small town is thus deeply linked with the growth and development of South Indian classical music.

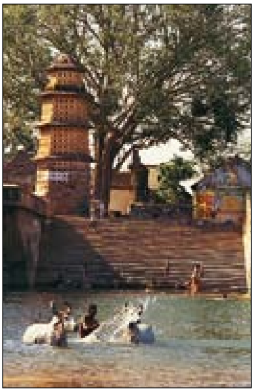
The little **Thyagaraja Temple**, in the town, was built to commemorate the last resting place of the celebrated composer-saint. A musical festival is held here every year on the anniversary of his death, which falls, according to the Tamil calendar, in January. Hundreds of musicians and students of Carnatic music gather in the town and sing Thyagaraja's songs from morning till midnight for a whole week.

As dawn breaks over the river, a procession of musicians makes the short journey from Thyagaraja's house to the temple, singing continuously all the way. Music lovers wait eagerly at the shrine, seated on the mud floor of the thatch-roofed auditorium. To the sacred chants of priests, the stone image of Thyagaraja is ritually bathed with milk, rosewater, sandalwood and honey. The five songs known as the *pancha ratna* ("five gems") of Thyagaraja, which are considered unequalled masterpieces of Carnatic music, are sung in a grand chorus by all the assembled musicians. This ceremony is an annual reaffirmation of devotion to the composer and to a great tradition of music. For music lovers from all over India, it can be a magical experience.

Also in the town is the 9th-century **Panchanandishvara Temple** ("Lord of the Five Rivers"), built by the Cholas. Dedicated to Shiva, the shrines of Uttara (north) Kailasha and Dakshina (south) Kailasha, on either side of the main temple, were built by the wives of Rajaraja I and Rajendra I *(see pp46–7)*. The temple's huge *prakara* (boundary) walls, pillared *mandapas* and the Mukti Mandapa are immortalized in the songs of the Nayannars, a sect of 7th-century poet-saints *(see p45)*.

Environs

Pullamangai village, 12 kms (7 miles) northeast of Tiruvaiyaru, is noted for the **Brahmapurishvara Temple**, dating to the 10th century. The temple features elegant depictions of various gods and goddesses.



Children frolicking in the waters of the Kaveri, Tiruvaiyaru

THANJAVUR BRONZES

Artisan fashioning bronze idols

The Thanjavur region's wealth of artistic traditions includes the creation of exquisite bronze images through a process known as *cire perdue* or the "lost wax" technique. A model of the image is first made in wax and then coated with layers of clay to create a mould, which is heated to allow the melting wax to flow out through a hole at the base. A molten alloy of five metals *(panch loha)* is poured into the hollow. When it cools, the mould is broken and the image is finished and polished. Finally, the image's eyes are sealed with a mixture of honey and ghee and then ritually "opened" by a priest, using a golden needle. Even today, traditional artisans, known as *sthapathis*, create these images according to a fixed set of rules and guidelines laid down in the *Shilpa Shastra*, an ancient treatise on art. The main centre for bronze casting in Tamil Nadu is Swamimalai *(see p593)*.

Carnatic Music

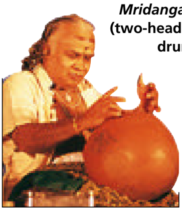
The classical music of South India is known as Carnatic music. Though based on the general concepts of raga (melody) and *tala* (rhythm) found in Hindustani music *(see pp28–9)*, Carnatic music differs in many respects. It is almost exclusively devotional in character, uses different percussion and musical instruments, and develops the melody in a more structured manner. It also lays more emphasis on rhythm. Some of the greatest Carnatic music was composed between 1750 and 1850, by the musical trinity of Thyagaraja, Syama Sastri, and Muthuswami Dikshitar who, between them, wrote over 2,500 songs in Sanskrit and Telegu, modifying and refining features that are now essential to the genre.

Thyagaraja, father of Carnatic music

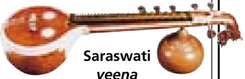
ACCOMPANYING INSTRUMENTS

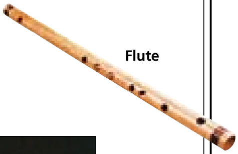
Traditional South Indian instruments such as the *veena*, the *nadasvaram*, the flute and the *thavil* are used for accompaniment, along with Western instruments such as the violin and saxophone.

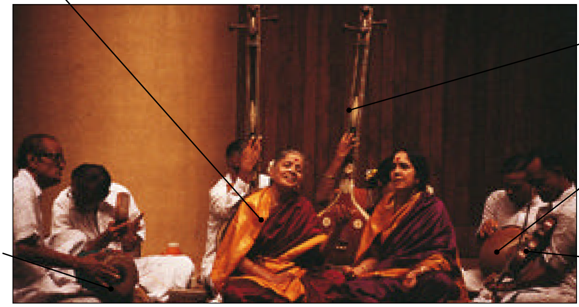
The violin, *a bow-string instrument of Western origin, is played in a seated position.*


The ghatam, *a mere clay pot, can produce fabulous rhythms in the hands of an accomplished performer.*

***Mridangam* (two-headed drum)**


Saraswati *veena*


Flute


MS Subbulakshmi is a leading vocalist.

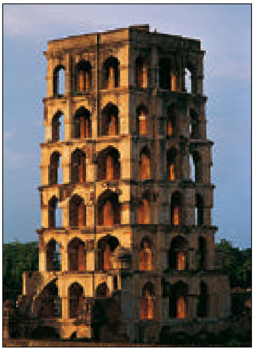
Music festivals *are often held in large cities, where concerts take place in small auditoriums, called* sabhas. *Most performers are accompanied by a violinist and two percussionists. A typical concert lasts for about three hours, during which a series of songs, usually in Telugu, are sung. The lyrics are as important as the melody, and many are devotional in nature.*

The nadasvaram, *which is a wind instrument, is a must at temple festivals, weddings and auspicious occasions. The* thavil *(drum) player performs complex rythmic improvisations to accompany the melody.*

The veena, *which resembles the more widely seen sitar, is a beautifully hand-crafted string instrument.*

Thanjavur ⓭

The city of Thanjavur, or Tanjore, lies in the fertile Kaveri Delta, a region often referred to as the "rice bowl of Tamil Nadu". For nearly a thousand years, this great town dominated the political history of the region as the capital of three powerful dynasties – the Cholas (9th–13th centuries), the Nayakas (1535–1676) and the Marathas (1676–1855). The magnificent Brihadishvara Temple *(see pp598–9)*, is the most important Chola monument, while the Royal Palace dates to the Nayaka and Maratha periods. Today, Thanjavur's culture extends beyond temples and palaces, to encompass classical music and dance. It is also a flourishing centre for bronze sculpture and painting.

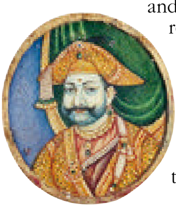


Seven-storeyed observation tower of the Royal Palace, Thanjavur

Shivaganga Fort

Off Hospital Rd. ○ *daily.*

The quadrangular Shivaganga Fort, southwest of the old city, was built by the Nayaka ruler, Sevappa Nayaka, in the mid-16th century. Its battlemented stone walls, which enclose an area of 14 ha (35 acres), are surrounded by a partly rock-cut moat. The square **Shivaganga Tank** in the fort was excavated by Rajaraja I, and later renovated to provide drinking water for the city. The fort also contains the great Brihadishvara Temple, Schwartz Church, and a public amusement park.



Maratha ruler Serfoji II (r.1798–1832)

Brihadishvara Temple

See pp598–9.

Schwartz Church

Off West Main Rd. ○ *daily.*

The 18th-century Christ Church or Schwartz Church, a legacy of Thanjavur's colonial past, stands to the east of the Shivaganga Tank. This church was founded by the Danish missionary, Reverend Frederik Christian Schwartz, in 1779. When he died in 1798, the enlightened Maratha ruler, Serfoji II, donated a striking marble tablet to the church. This tablet, made by John Flaxman, has been placed at the western end of the church. It depicts the dying missionary blessing his royal patron, surrounded by ministers and pupils from the school that he established.

Royal Palace

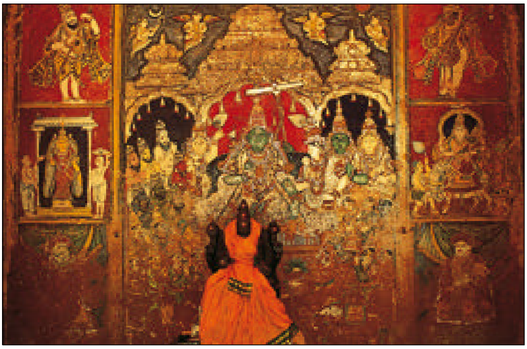
East Main Rd. ○ *daily.* ♿ 📷 *extra charges.*

Resembling the shape of a flying eagle, this palace was built originally by the Nayaka rulers as their royal residence, and was subsequently remodelled by the Marathas. A large quadrangular courtyard leads into the palace complex, at one end of which is a pyramidal, temple-like tower. Outside the palace complex stands the seven storeyed, arcaded observation tower, now without its capping pavilion.

The splendid Maratha Durbar Hall, built by Shahji II in 1684, has elaborately painted and decorated pillars, walls and ceiling. A wooden canopy embellished with glittering glass pieces and supported by four wooden pillars stands above a green granite slab on which the royal Maratha throne once stood. The other buildings include the Sadir Mahal, which is still the residence of the erstwhile royal family, and the Puja Mahal.

The **Rajaraja Museum and Art Gallery**, in the Nayaka Durbar Hall, was established in 1951 and has an impressive collection of bronze and stone idols dating from the 7th to the 20th centuries. Particularly noteworthy are the images of Shiva, such as the Kalyanasundaramurti, which depicts the wedding of Shiva and Parvati *(see p566)*, and the Bhikshatanamurti, which shows Shiva as a wandering mendicant, carrying a begging bowl and accompanied by a dog.

Next to the Rajaraja Museum is the **Saraswati Mahal Library**, constructed by the Maratha rulers. This is one of the most important reference libraries in India, with a fine collection of rare palm-leaf manuscripts and books collected by the versa-

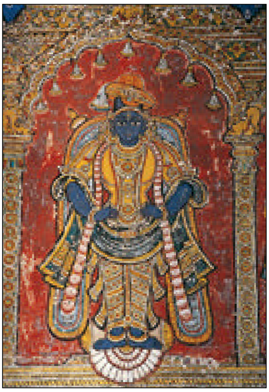


Mural at the entrance of Saraswati Mahal, Royal Palace, Thanjavur

tile and scholarly Serfoji II. An adjoining **Museum** displays some of these valuable works.

The **Royal Museum** occupies part of the private quarters of the Maratha Palace, and exhibits the personal collection of Serfoji II.

Nearby is the Sangeeta Mahal (Music Hall), built by the Nayakas, and specially designed with acoustic features for musical gatherings.



Vithoba fresco in the Art Gallery, Royal Palace, Thanjavur

🏛 Rajaraja Museum and Art Gallery

○ *daily.* ● *public hols.* 📷

🏛 Saraswati Mahal Library

● *to public.* **Museum** ○ *Thu–Tue.*

🏛 Royal Museum

○ *daily.* 📷

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

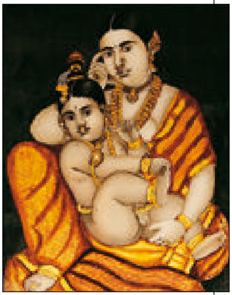
Thanjavur district. 350 km (218 miles) SW of Chennai. 👥 *215,800.* 🚉 🚌 ℹ *Jawan Bhavan, (04362) 230 984.* ● *Mon–Sat.* 🎉 *Rajaraja Chola's Birth Anniversary (Oct).*

Environs

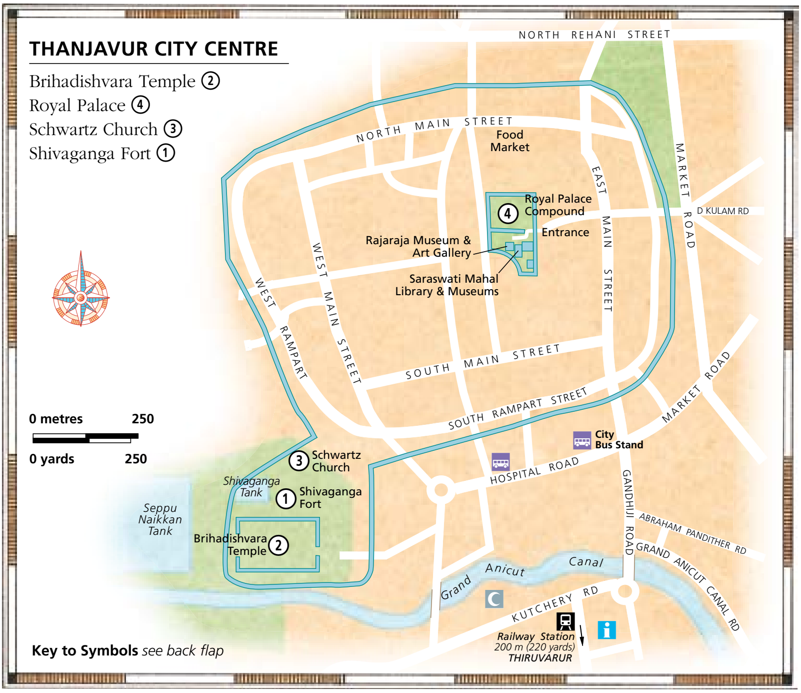
Lying 55 km (34 miles) east of Thanjavur, Thiruvarur is famous for its Thyagaraja Temple dedicated to the Somaskanda form of Shiva *(see p578)*. The temple has four *gopuras*. Its ceiling is covered with 17th-century paintings of scenes from the Shiva legend.

THANJAVUR PAINTINGS

A distinctive school of painting emerged during the rule of the Marathas, patronized by Serfoji II. This highly ornamental style was characterized by vibrant colours as well as decoration with gold leaf and precious and semi-precious stones. The themes are mostly religious, and the symbolic colour palette of red, black, blue and white depicts each deity in a specific colour. The subjects usually have rotund bodies and almond-shaped eyes. A favourite image is Krishna portrayed as a chubby infant.



Baby Krishna with his mother, Yashodhara

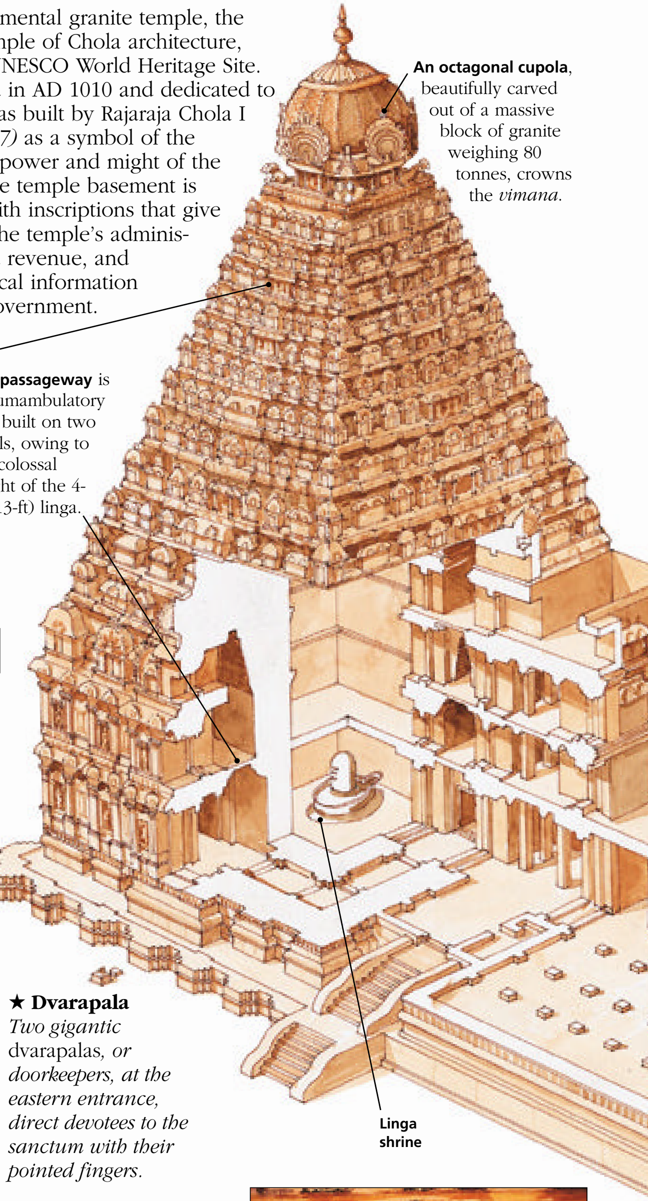


THANJAVUR CITY CENTRE
Brihadishvara Temple ②
Royal Palace ④
Schwartz Church ③
Shivaganga Fort ①
NORTH REHANI STREET
NORTH MAIN STREET
Food Market
EAST MAIN STREET
MARKET ROAD
D KULAM RD
Royal Palace Compound
④
Entrance
Rajaraja Museum & Art Gallery
Saraswati Mahal Library & Museums
WEST MAIN STREET
WEST RAMPART
SOUTH MAIN STREET
SOUTH RAMPART STREET
MARKET ROAD
City Bus Stand
HOSPITAL ROAD
GANDHIJI ROAD
ABRAHAM PANDITHER RD
GRAND ANICUT CANAL RD
Grand Anicut Canal
KUTCHERY RD
Railway Station
200 m (220 yards)
THIRUVARUR
③ Schwartz Church
Shivaganga Tank
① Shivaganga Fort
Seppu Naikkan Tank
Brihadishvara Temple ②
0 metres 250
0 yards 250
Key to Symbols see back flap

Thanjavur: Brihadishvara Temple

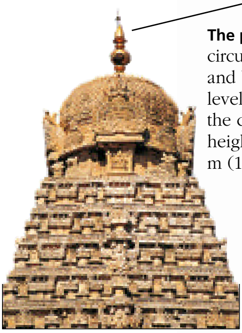
A Shiva sculpture

This monumental granite temple, the finest example of Chola architecture, is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Completed in AD 1010 and dedicated to Shiva, it was built by Rajaraja Chola I *(see pp46–7)* as a symbol of the unrivalled power and might of the Cholas. The temple basement is covered with inscriptions that give details of the temple's administration and revenue, and provide valuable historical information on Chola society and government.



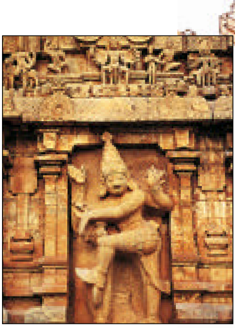
An octagonal cupola, beautifully carved out of a massive block of granite weighing 80 tonnes, crowns the *vimana*.

The passageway is circumambulatory and built on two levels, owing to the colossal height of the 4-m (13-ft) linga.



★ Vimana

The 66-m (217-ft) high pyramid-shaped vimana, *over the sanctum, is a 13-storeyed structure. Its gilded finial was presented by the king.*



★ Dvarapala

Two gigantic dvarapalas, *or doorkeepers, at the eastern entrance, direct devotees to the sanctum with their pointed fingers.*

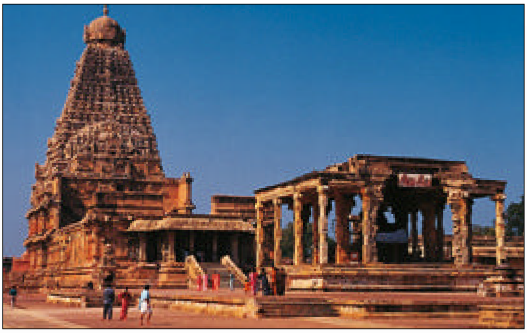
Linga shrine

Frescoes

Chola frescoes adorn the passage around the sanctum. They were discovered when the 17-century Maratha paintings covering them began to disintegrate.

STAR FEATURES

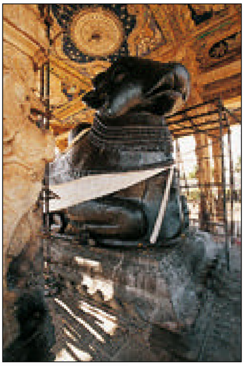
- ★ Vimana
- ★ Dvarapala
- ★ Nandi Mandapa



General View of the Temple
The Brihadishvara Temple stands in the middle of a rectangular court, surrounded by subsidiary shrines. On the southern side of the courtyard is an Archaeological Museum which displays, among other things, photographs of the temple before restoration.

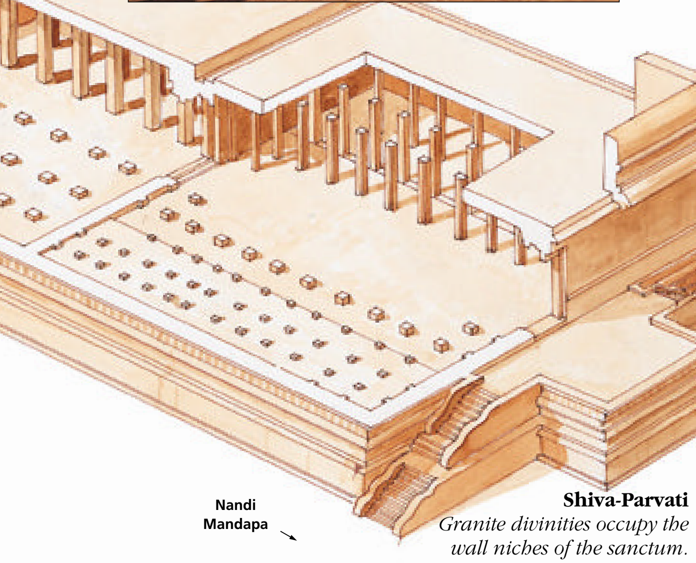
VISITORS' CHECKLIST

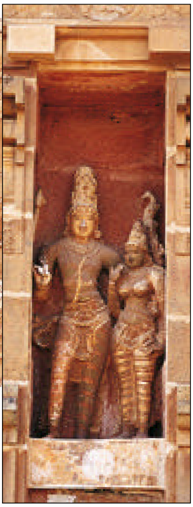
Thanjavur. W of bus stand.
○ *daily. For permission to visit inner chambers of the sanctum and the top floors, contact the temple, (04362) 230 826, or Thanjavur tourist office.*
Archaeological Museum
○ *daily.* ◻



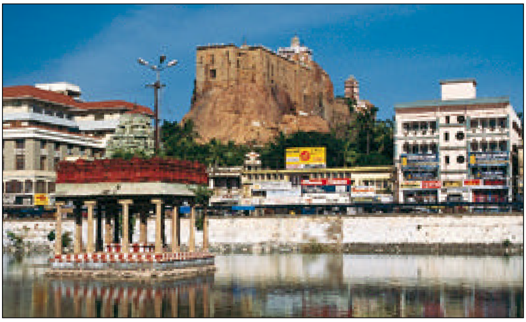
★ Nandi Mandapa
Carved out of a single block of granite weighing 25 tonnes, this huge Nandi figure is 6 m (20 ft) long, and faces the inner sanctum.

Priests Outside the Temple
Although under the jurisdiction of the Archaeological Survey of India, the temple has recently opened for worship.





Shiva-Parvati
Granite divinities occupy the wall niches of the sanctum.



Tiruchirapalli's Rock Fort looming above the city

Tiruchirapalli ⑭

Tiruchirapalli district. 60 km (37 miles) W of Thanjavur. 👥 *746,100.* ✈ *7 km (4 miles) S of town centre, then bus or taxi.* 🚆 🚌 ℹ *Hotel Tamil Nadu, 1 Williams Rd, (0431) 241 4346.* 🎉 *Teppakulam Float Festival (Mar).*

Situated at the head of the fertile Kaveri Delta, this city is named after the fierce three-headed demon *(tirusira)* who attained salvation after being slain by Shiva. The town's history is interwoven with the political fortunes of the Pallavas, Cholas, Nayakas and finally the British, who shortened its name to Trichy. Today, Tiruchirapalli is Tamil Nadu's second largest city.

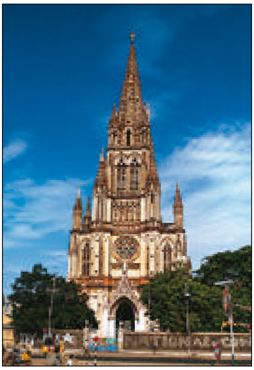
Dominating the town is the massive **Rock Fort**, perched dramatically on a rocky outcrop that rises 83 m (272 ft) above the flat plains. This impregnable fortress was constructed by the Nayakas of neighbouring Madurai, who made Tiruchirapalli their second capital in the 16th and 17th centuries. They also expanded the Shiva temple, where the god is worshipped as Thayumanavar (the "God who Became a Mother"). Legend says that when a flash flood prevented a mother from coming to her pregnant daughter's aid, Shiva assumed her form and helped in the childbirth. Further up, on the summit, is a small Ganesha Temple from where there are spectacular views of verdant rice fields and the sacred island of Srirangam.

At the base of the southern rock face is the first of the two cave temples. The lower one dates to the 8th century, and the upper one to the reign of the great Pallava ruler, Mahendra Varman (r.600–630). This contains one of the great wonders of Pallava art, the Gangadhara Panel, depicting Shiva holding a lock of his matted hair to receive the River Ganga as she descends from the heavens *(see p163).*

Much of the present town dates to the 18th and 19th centuries, when the British constructed the cantonment and numerous civic buildings and churches. Many of these buildings are located around the large Teppakulam Tank at the base of the fort – a busy area surrounded by fruit, vegetable and flower markets.

Among the town's earliest churches are Christ Church (1766), founded by Reverend Frederick Christian Schwartz *(see p596)*, to the north of the tank; the Neo-Gothic **Cathedral of Our Lady of Lourdes** (1840), to the west of the tank; and the Jesuit St Joseph's College, also to the west of the tank. In the cantonment, which lies to the southwest of the fort, is the Church of St John (1816).

Rock Fort
○ *daily.* ✋ 📷 *extra charges.*



The Cathedral of Our Lady of Lourdes at Tiruchirapalli

THE KAVERI RIVER

Shrine depicting the legend of Goddess Kaveri

One of the nine sacred rivers of India, the Kaveri covers a length of 785 km (488 miles) from its source at Talakaveri in Karnataka *(see p521)* to Poompuhar on the Bay of Bengal. Myths glorify the Kaveri as the personification of a female deity (in some versions, Brahma's daughter), who erupted from the sage Agasthya's *kamandala* (water pot). From the early centuries of the Christian era, the Kaveri has been central to Tamil culture, especially under the Cholas, who ruled the region between the 9th and 13th centuries. The great temple cities that developed along its course became centres of religion, dance, music and the arts. Farsighted water management schemes in the delta, instigated by the Cholas, transformed the Thanjavur region into the "rice bowl" of Tamil Nadu, and even today, devotees offer rice to the river goddess on the 18th day of the Tamil month Adi (July/August). Unfortunately, the river has now become the subject of a bitter dispute over water distribution between the Tamil Nadu and Karnataka governments.

Environs

At **Kallanai**, 24 km (15 miles) northeast of Tiruchirapalli, is a 300-m (984-ft) long earthen dam across the Kaveri river, the Grand Anicut. This formed part of the huge hydraulic system created by the Cholas *(see pp46–7)* to divert water from the river into a vast network of irrigation canals. The original no longer exists and the dam in operation today was rebuilt by British engineers in the 19th century.

Other places of interest are the 7th-century Shiva temple at **Narthamalai**, 17 km (11 miles) to the south, and the 9th-century Jain cave temples at **Sittanavasal**, 58 km (36 miles) to the southeast. Faded paintings here portray dancing girls, and a lotus tank with swans and fishes.

Srirangam ⑮

Tiruchirapalli district. 9 km (6 miles) N of Tiruchirapalli. 🚌 🎏 *Vaikuntha Ekadashi (Dec/Jan), Chariot Festival (Jan).*

The sacred 3-km (2-mile) long island of Srirangam, formed by the Kaveri and Kollidam rivers, is one of the most revered pilgrimage sites in South India. At its core is the majestic **Ranganatha Temple** *(see pp552–3)*. Dedicated to Vishnu, this is one of the largest temple complexes in Tamil Nadu and covers an enormous area of 60 ha (148 acres).

The complex as it exists today has evolved over a period of four centuries. Extensive reconstruction first took place in 1371, after the original 10th-century temple was destroyed by the Delhi Sultan, Alauddin Khilji *(see p48)*. Its present form, however, includes extensions added in the 17th century by the Nayaka rulers, whose second capital was in neighbouring Tiruchirapalli. Interestingly, the last addition was as recent as 1987, when the unfinished southern gateway was finally completed.

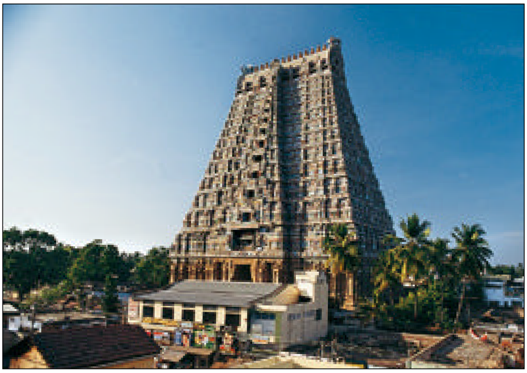
Dominated by 21 impressive *gopuras* (gateways), the complex has seven *prakara* (boundary) walls defining its seven enclosures. The outer three comprise residences for priests, hostels for pilgrims, and small restaurants and shops selling religious books, pictures and sundry temple offerings. The sacred precinct begins from the fourth enclosure, beyond which non-Hindus are not allowed. This is where the temple's most important shrines are located. Among these are the spacious Thousand-Columned Mandapa, where images of Ranganatha and his consort are enthroned and worshipped during one of the temple's many festivals, and the magnificent **Seshagirirayar Mandapa**, with its rearing stone horses with mounted warriors attacking fierce animals and *yalis* (mythical leonine beasts). A small museum close by has a good collection of stone and bronze sculptures.

A coracle ride on the Kaveri, Srirangam

Horse, Seshagirirayar Mandapa

The core of the complex is the sanctum, with its gold-plated *vimana*, where an image of Vishnu as Ranganatha, reclining on the cosmic serpent, Adisesha, is enshrined. This temple is also the place where the great 11th-century philosopher, Ramanuja *(see p522)*, developed the *bhakti* cult of personal devotion into a formalized mode of worship. Today, a constant cycle of festivals glorifying Vishnu are celebrated throughout the year.

East of the Ranganatha Temple is the mid-17th-century **Jambukeshvara Temple** in the village of Tiruvanaikka. The main sanctum contains one of the five elemental lingas *(see p584)*, representing Shiva as the manifestation of water. Legend says that the linga was created by Shiva's consort, Parvati, and in homage to her, the priest wears a sari when performing the *puja*. Non-Hindus can view the outer shrines in the complex, but not the main sanctum.


One of the impressive gateways at the Ranganatha Temple, Srirangam

🛕 **Sri Ranganatha Temple**
○ *daily.* 🤲 *for viewpoint on top.* ☞ 📷 *extra charges.* **Museum** ○ *daily.*

🛕 **Jambukeshvara Temple**
○ *daily.* 🤲 📷 *extra charges.*

The verdant Marthanda Valley, with the misty Nilgiri Hills in the background ▷

Yerikadu Lake, from which Yercaud derives its name

Yercaud ⓰

Salem district. 32 km (20 miles) NE of Salem. 🚆 *Salem, then bus.* 🚌 ℹ *Hotel Tamil Nadu, Yercaud Ghat Rd, (04281) 223 334.* 🎉 *Shevaroyan Temple Festival (May).*

This attractive hill station, situated in the Shevaroy Hills, was established in the early 1800s by the British, who introduced the coffee plant here. Today, this is one of the state's most productive areas, and its surrounding slopes are entirely covered with plantations of coffee, tea, jackfruit and plantains.

The man-made **Yerikadu Lake** and the **Killiyur Falls** are two of the area's most scenic spots, while **Lady's Seat**, near the lake, offers delightful views of the surrounding countryside. The town and its environs have several apiaries that produce delicious honey. The **Horticultural Research Station** has an interesting collection of rare plants.

Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary ⓱

Nilgiris district. 64 km (40 miles) W of Udhagamandalam. 🚌 *Theppakadu, the main entry point.* ℹ *Tourist Office, Theppakadu, (0423) 244 3977. For bookings contact Wildlife Warden's Office, Ooty, (0423) 244 4098.* ○ *daily (may be closed during Feb–Mar).* 🤲 👉 *Jeeps available.* 🐘

Mudumalai or "Ancient Hill Range", situated at the base of the Nilgiri Hills, is separated from Karnataka's Bandipur National Park *(see p520)* by the Moyar river.

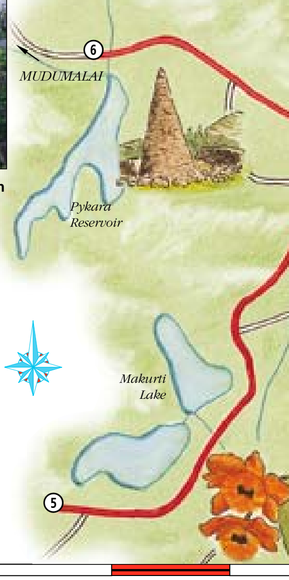
This sanctuary is an important constituent of the 5,500-sq km (2,124-sq mile) Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve of the Western Ghats. Along with adjacent Bandipur and Nagarhole, it provides one of the most important refuges for the elephant and the bison in India. The park encompasses 322 sq km (124 sq miles) of undulating terrain, and rises to 1,250 m (4,101 ft) at Moyar

Tour of the Nilgiris ⓲

The picturesque *nila Giri* or "Blue Mountains", at the junction of the Eastern and Western Ghats, are so named because the shrub *kurunji (Strobilanthes kunthianus)* turns the hills blue with its blossoms every 12 years. Covered with high altitude grasslands and *sholas* (montane evergreen forests), they are of special interest to botanists and entomologists. This tour offers enchanting glimpses of lush green valleys, hill stations and hamlets inhabited by tribal people.

Jacaranda in full bloom in the Nilgiris

Pykara ⑥
Dams, fenced *sholas*, green meadows and conical-shaped Toda houses can be seen here.



TIPS FOR DRIVERS

Length: *90 km (56 miles).*
Getting around: *Avalanche and Pykara can only be reached from Ooty, as there are no road links from Coonoor. The route is well covered by public & private buses. An exciting alternative is the* ***Nilgiri Blue Mountain Train****, which runs from Mettupalayam to Ooty, via Coonoor* (see p777).

Avalanche ⑤
This natural paradise has dense forests and a beautiful lake.

0 km 3
0 miles 3

KEY

🟥 Tour route
▬ Other roads

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp713–14 and pp740–41

Betta. The lowest point of the sanctuary is at the picturesque **Moyar Waterfalls**. Its topography is as varied as the vegetation, which ranges from dense deciduous forests of teak, laurel and rosewood in the west, to scrub jungle towards the east, interspersed with grassland, swamps and bamboo brakes.

The sanctuary provides a habitat for a rich diversity of wildlife, including the Nilgiri tahr *(see p19)*, sambar, tiger, leopard, spotted deer, flying squirrel, Malabar civet and Nilgiri langur. Over 120 species of birds, resident and migratory, can be seen here as well. These include the scops owl and the crested hawk eagle.

GUARDIAN DEITIES

Huge figures made of burnt clay can be seen on the outskirts of villages in the southern districts of Tamil Nadu. They are worshipped as the guardians of the villages. The most prominent folk deity is Ayyanar, the son of Shiva and Vishnu. This mustachioed god, with prominent eyes, wears short trousers and carries a sword. His horse stands by his side so that he can ride through the night, keeping evil spirits at bay. Other deities are Munisami, who holds a trident and shield and rides a lion, and the black-hued Karuppusami, the nocturnal avenger who punishes thieves.

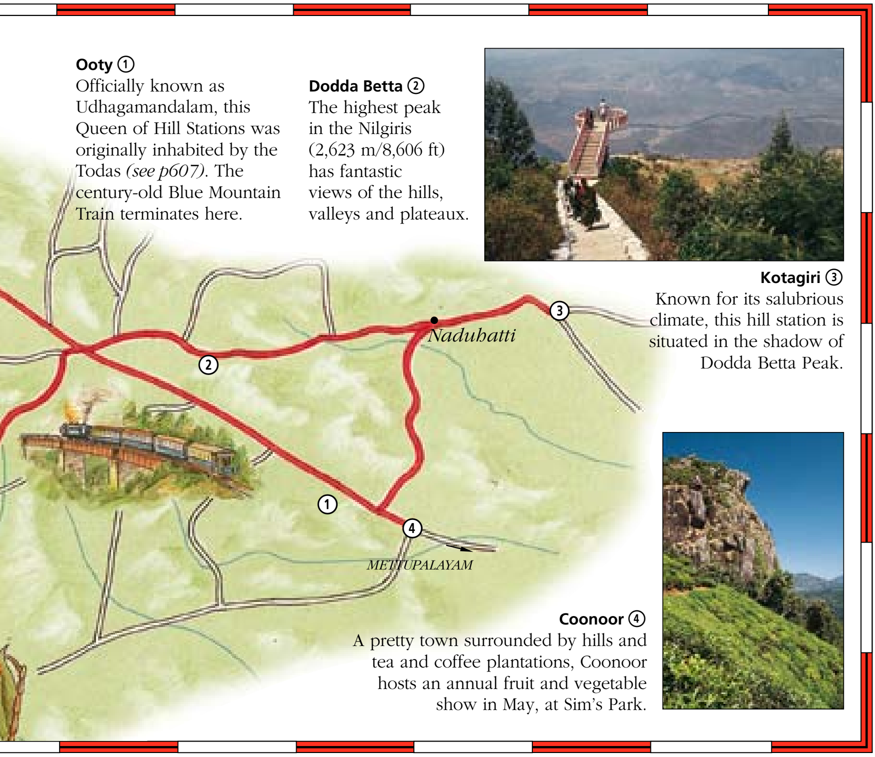
Guardian deities outside a village shrine

Coimbatore ⑲

Coimbatore district. 96 km (60 miles) NE of Chennai. 👥 *924,000.* ✈ *10 km (6 miles) NE of city centre, then bus.* 🚆 🚌 ℹ *Tamil Nadu Tourism, Railway Station, (0422) 230 2176.* ⊖ *Mon–Sat.* 🎉 *Thaipoosam (Jan/Feb), Karthigai (Nov/Dec).*

Tamil Nadu's third largest city, Coimbatore is a major industrial centre and the state's commercial capital, with huge textile mills and engineering units. It is also a convenient base for visiting the Nilgiri hill stations. The city has a reputed Agricultural College, and two famous temples. The **Perur Temple** on the Noyyal river and the popular **Muruga Maruthamalai Temple**, on top of a hillock, are dedicated to Lord Shiva and his son, Murugan, respectively. They are visited by thousands of devotees during temple festivals.

The **Siruvani Waterfalls** are beautiful, and Siruvani water famed for its purity and taste.



Ooty ①
Officially known as Udhagamandalam, this Queen of Hill Stations was originally inhabited by the Todas *(see p607)*. The century-old Blue Mountain Train terminates here.

Dodda Betta ②
The highest peak in the Nilgiris (2,623 m/8,606 ft) has fantastic views of the hills, valleys and plateaux.

Kotagiri ③
Known for its salubrious climate, this hill station is situated in the shadow of Dodda Betta Peak.

Coonoor ④
A pretty town surrounded by hills and tea and coffee plantations, Coonoor hosts an annual fruit and vegetable show in May, at Sim's Park.

Tree-lined avenue in Kodaikanal

Palani ⑳

Madurai district. 100 km (62 miles) NW of Madurai. ✈ *Madurai, 119 km (74 miles) SE of town centre, then bus or taxi.* 🚆 🚌 🎉 *Thaipoosam (Jan/Feb), Karthigai (Nov/Dec).*

A major pilgrimage centre, Palani is situated on the edge of the great Vyapuri Tank. Its hilltop **Subrahmanyam Temple** is the most famous of the six abodes of Murugan, the son of Shiva, who is said to have come here disguised as a mendicant after quarreling over a fruit with his brother, Ganesha. Popularly known as Dandayutha Pani ("Bearer of the Staff"), Murugan is depicted with a clean shaven head, holding a stick. His image is made of medicinal herbs, mixed together to create a wax-like substance. During the Thaipoosam festival, the temple attracts thousands of pilgrims, many of whom shave their heads as an act of worship. An electric cable car takes devotees up the 600 steps to the hill shrine.

Palani is also a base for hikes in the surrounding hills.

Kodaikanal ㉑

Madurai district. 120 km (75 miles) NW of Madurai. 🚆 *Palani, 65 km (40 miles) N of town centre, then bus or taxi.* 🚌 ℹ *Tamil Nadu Tourism, (04542) 241 675.* ⏲ *Mon–Sat.* 🎉 *Summer Festival (May), Flower Show (May), Winter Festival (Dec).* 🏊

Lush green valleys, terraced plantations and a pleasant climate make Kodaikanal one of Tamil Nadu's most popular hill stations. Kodaikanal, or Kodai as it is commonly called, was first "discovered" by American missionaries in the 1840s. Drawn by its bracing climate and clean environs, they created a sanatorium-cum-retreat here. They also established Kodai's International School in 1901.

This picturesque town is today spread out around the man-made, star-shaped **Kodai Lake**, created by the dam built by Sir Vere Henry Levinge in 1863. The 3-km (2-mile) long trail around the lake makes for a pleasant walk. On the shore is a Boat House, built in 1910. East of the lake is **Bryant Park**, famous for its plant collection and its annual flower show, held in May.

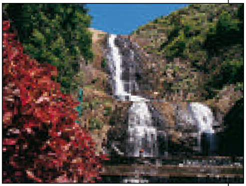
Beyond the city centre are a number of scenic areas, such as Pillar Rocks, Silver Cascade and Green Valley View (originally known as Suicide Point), which offer enchanting picnic spots and views of the deep valley. Kodai also has many opportunities for cycling, riding and long, rambling walks. A trail following the hillside, called **Coaker's Walk**, provides a panoramic view of the hill station. The walk ends at the Church of St Peter, built in 1884, which has fine stained-glass windows. Nearby is a small **Telescope House**.

Some 3 km (2 miles) north-east of the lake is the **Kurunji Andavar Temple**, dedicated to Murugan. It is named after the amazing *kurunji* flowers *(see p649)*, associated with the god. The Chettiar Park nearby, laid out along the hillside, is where the *kurunji* blooms every 12 years.

Religious offerings for sale in Palani

HIKING IN THE NILGIRIS

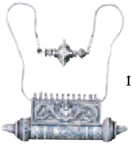
Short excursions around Ooty offer many opportunities to explore the Nilgiris *(see pp604–605)* on foot. There are scenic trails in the grasslands around Mukurthi, an extinct volcano known to the Todas as the "Gateway to the Dead", and in the windswept Avalanche region, which consists of rolling, grassy downs, *shola* trees and rhododendrons. The western edge of this region falls away into the dense tropical jungles of Kerala. The eastern half of the range, largely deprived of the Southwest Monsoon, is dominated by dry scrub and volcanic rock.



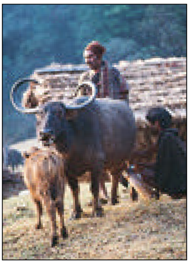
Waterfall in the Nilgiris

The Todas

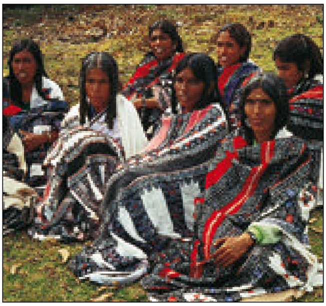
The Nilgiris are home to 18 tribal groups, among whom the Todas are the most remarkable. A pastoral community, the Todas are fair-skinned and curly haired, and are strict vegetarians. Their language, though of Dravidian origin, has no script. According to their creation myth, Goddess Teikirshy and her brother On first created the buffalo by waving a magic wand, and then created the Toda man. The first Toda woman was created from the right rib of the man. The Todas' first contact with civilization occurred when the East India Company annexed the Nilgiris in 1799. In 1823, John Sullivan, the then Collector of Coimbatore, built the first stone house in Ooty on land purchased from the Todas. Today, there are only about 1,100 Todas left.



Traditional silver jewellery

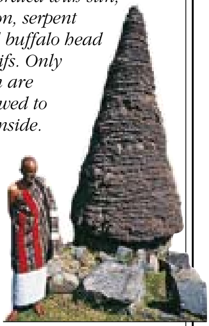


Toda buffaloes, *pale brown with long horns, are deeply revered. A buffalo is often sacrificed after a funeral to accompany the deceased's soul in the afterlife.*

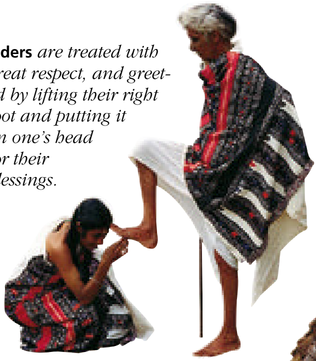


Homespun cotton shawls *called* puthikuzhi *have black-and-red embroidered motifs. Worn by both Toda men and women, they are tied around the waist, with one end thrown over the shoulder, almost like a Roman toga.*

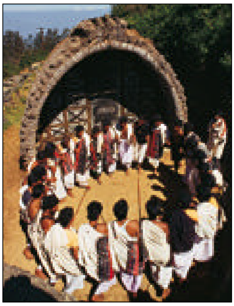
The dairy temple, *conical in shape, is decorated with sun, moon, serpent and buffalo head motifs. Only men are allowed to go inside.*



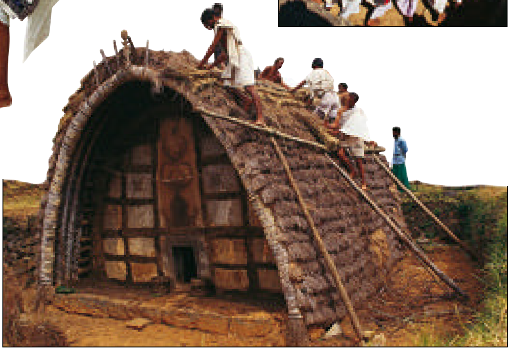
Elders *are treated with great respect, and greeted by lifting their right foot and putting it on one's head for their blessings.*



Dairy ceremonies *are festive occasions, generally celebrated with dance and music. The lively songs consist of simple stanzas, describing important events from the Todas' past.*



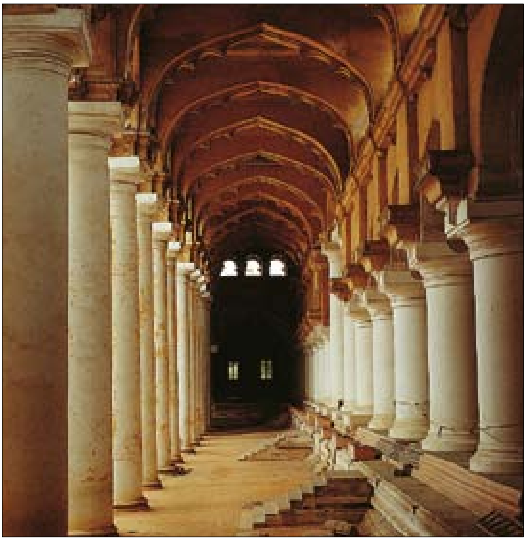
The barrel-shaped huts, *made of bamboo, grass and cane, consist of a single room. Entry is through a carved wooden door, so small that one has to crawl through it to enter. Several of these windowless bamboo huts make up a Toda village, which is called a* mund.



Madurai ㉒

Sculpted image

One of South India's great temple towns, Madurai is synonymous with the celebrated Minakshi Temple *(see pp610–11)*. This ancient city on the banks of the Vaigai river has, over the centuries, been a rich repository of Tamil culture. Some 2,000 years ago, it hosted the famous Sangams (gatherings of writers and poets), which were to provide Tamil literature with some of its most enduring works. From the 7th to 13th centuries, as the capital of the Pandyas, it saw art and trade with Rome and China flourish. It later became part of the Vijayanagar Empire, and was the Nayaka capital in the 16th–17th centuries. Today, religion and culture remain a vibrant part of the city's daily life.



The grand pillared hall in the Thirumalai Nayaka Palace

Minakshi Sundareshvara Temple

See pp610–11.

Thirumalai Nayaka Palace

1.5 km (1 mile) SE of Minakshi Temple. ○ *daily.* **Son et Lumière** *(English): 6.45pm, daily.*

The power and wealth of the Nayakas is evident from the remains of this once grand palace, built by Thirumalai Nayaka in 1636. The building, with its interesting Islamic influences, was partially restored in the 19th century by Lord Napier, governor of Madras between 1866 and 1872. Today, only the spacious rectangular courtyard called the Swarga Vilasam ("Heavenly Pavilion") and a few adjoining buildings survive, their awesome scale evoking the grandeur of a vanished era. The courtyard measures 3,900 sq m (41,979 sq ft), and is surrounded by massive circular pillars. To its west lies the Throne Chamber, a vast room with a raised, octagonal dome. This room leads to the Dance Hall, which now houses a display of archaeological objects.

Theppakulam

E of Minakshi Temple. ○ *daily.*

Madurai's great tank is another marvel attributed to Thirumalai Nayaka. The square tank has steps, flanked by animal- and bird-shaped balustrades, leading down to the rippling waters. This is the venue of the annual Theppam (Float) festival, celebrating the marriage of Shiva and Minakshi, when their images are taken in illuminated boats to the small pavilion in the centre of the tank.

Kadal Alagar Temple

1 km (0.6 miles) SW of Minakshi Temple. ○ *daily.* ● *to non-Hindus.*

One of the 108 sacred Vaishnavite shrines, this glorious temple has three superimposed sanctuaries, of diminishing size, housing Lord Vishnu. From bottom to top, the images show Vishnu in the seated, standing and reclining position. The outer wall has beautiful sculptures and stone screens.

Anglican Cathedral

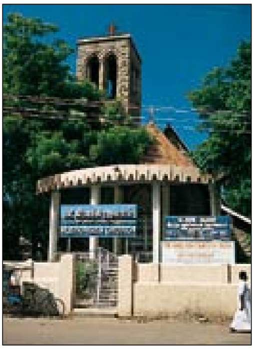
Off W Masi St. ○ *daily.*

A fine example of Neo-Gothic architecture, this church was designed by Robert Fellowes Chisholm *(see p569)*, and consecrated in 1881.

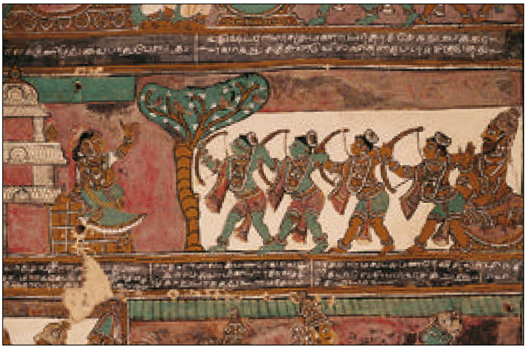
Tombs of the Madurai Sultans

N of the Vaigai river. ○ *daily.*

The sultans of Madurai ruled the city after the invasion in 1310 by Malik Kafur, a general of Alauddin Khilji *(see p48)*. They lie buried to the north of the city. The complex includes Alauddin's Mosque, with its flat-roofed prayer hall and tapering octagonal towers, and the tomb of a local Sufi saint, Bara Mastan Sada, built in the 16th century.



Entrance to the Anglican Cathedral at Madurai



A mural depicting a scene from the *Ramayana,* Alagarkoil Temple

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

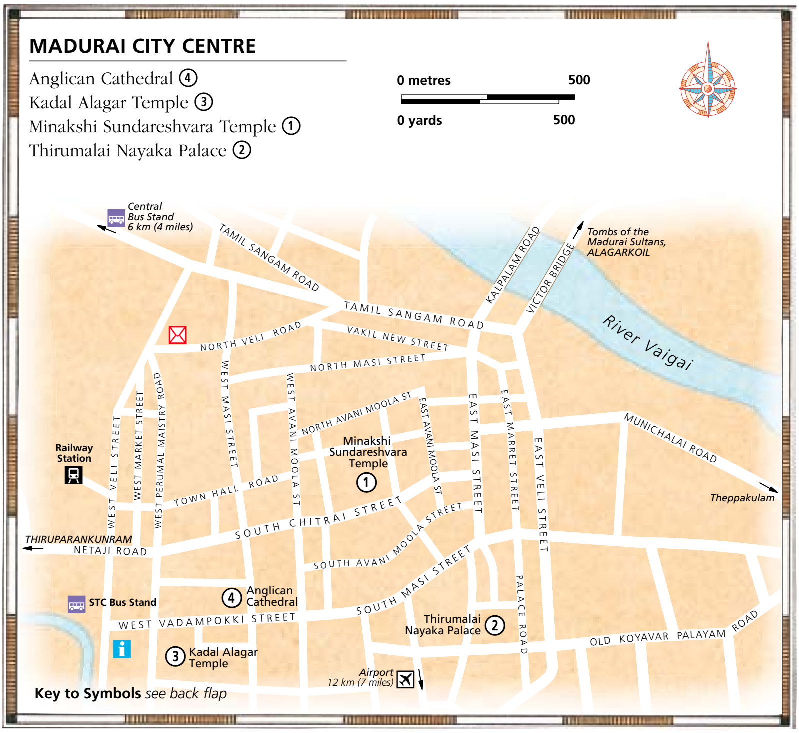
Madurai district. 498 km (309 miles) SW of Chennai. 👥 *923,000.* ✈ *12 km (7 miles) S of city centre.* 🚆 🚌 ℹ *Hotel Tamil Nadu, (0452) 273 3757.* ⊖ *Mon–Sat.* 🎪 *Theppam Festival (Jan/Feb), Navaratri (Sep/Oct), Avanimoolam (Aug/Sep).*

Environs

Thiruparankunram, 6 km (4 miles) southwest of Madurai, is a small town known for its sacred granite hill. Regarded as one of the six sacred abodes of Murugan, the son of Shiva, the hill was the site of his marriage to Devayani, the daughter of Indra. There is a rock-cut temple here, built by the Pandyas in the 8th century. The temple is approached through a series of 17th- and 18th-century *mandapas*, at ascending levels, linked by stone steps. The entrance *mandapa* has typical Nayaka period pillars with horse and *yali* riders, while portraits of Nayaka rulers are carved on the columns. The temple's main sanctum contains five shrines.

The 14-day temple festival, in March/April, celebrates the victory of Murugan over the demon Suran, his coronation, and his subsequent marriage to Devayani.

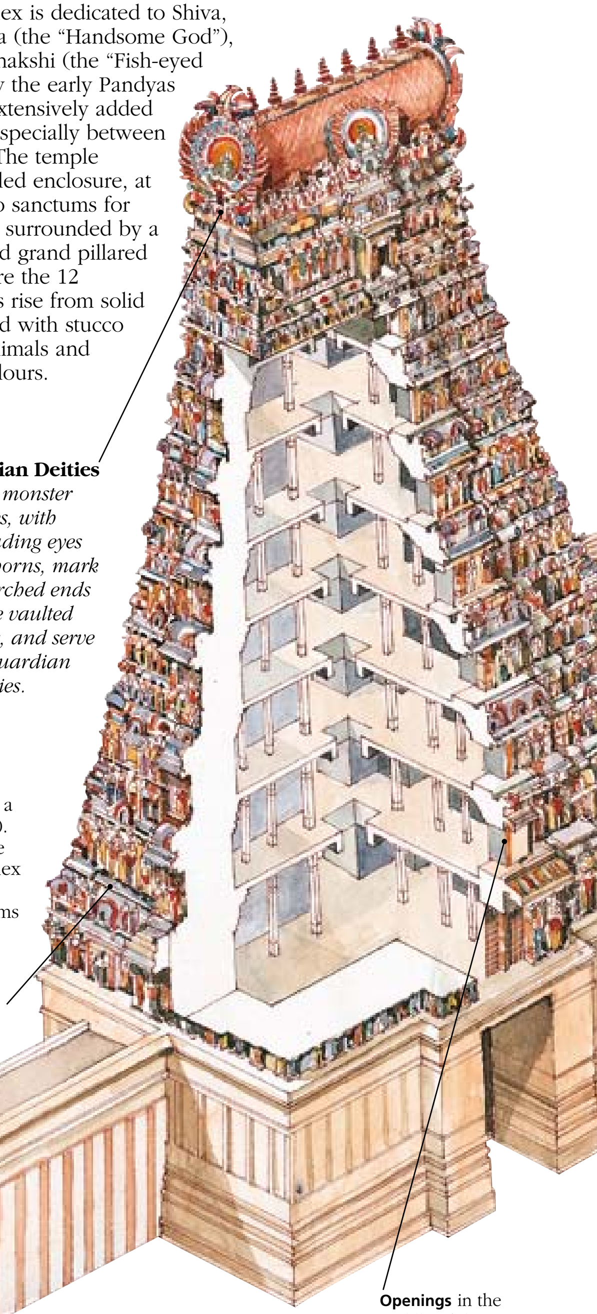
The temple at **Alagarkoil**, 12 km (7 miles) north of Madurai, is dedicated to Kallalagar, a form of Vishnu who is regarded as Minakshi's brother. According to legend, when Kallalagar went to give his sister in marriage to Sundareshvara, he stayed on the banks of the Vaigai river during the ceremony. This event is celebrated every year, in April/May. On the summit of the hill is Palamudircholai, the last of the six abodes of Murugan, marked by a shrine, while further away is Nupura Ganga, a perennial spring, used for all rituals in the temple, and believed to have emerged from Vishnu's ankle.

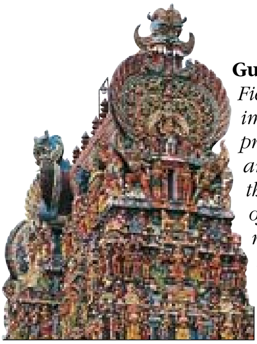


MADURAI CITY CENTRE
Anglican Cathedral ④
Kadal Alagar Temple ③
Minakshi Sundareshvara Temple ①
Thirumalai Nayaka Palace ②
0 metres 500
0 yards 500
Central Bus Stand 6 km (4 miles)
Tombs of the Madurai Sultans, ALAGARKOIL
TAMIL SANGAM ROAD
KALPALAM ROAD
VICTOR BRIDGE
River Vaigai
VAKIL NEW STREET
NORTH VELI ROAD
NORTH MASI STREET
WEST MASI STREET
WEST AVANI MOOLA ST
NORTH AVANI MOOLA ST
EAST AVANI MOOLA ST
EAST MASI STREET
EAST MARRET STREET
EAST VELI STREET
MUNICHALAI ROAD
Theppakulam
Minakshi Sundareshvara Temple ①
Railway Station
WEST VELI STREET
WEST MARKET STREET
WEST PERUMAL MAISTRY ROAD
TOWN HALL ROAD
SOUTH CHITRAI STREET
SOUTH AVANI MOOLA STREET
SOUTH MASI STREET
THIRUPARANKUNRAM
NETAJI ROAD
STC Bus Stand
④ Anglican Cathedral
WEST VADAMPOKKI STREET
Thirumalai Nayaka Palace ②
PALACE ROAD
OLD KOYAVAR PALAYAM ROAD
③ Kadal Alagar Temple
Airport 12 km (7 miles)
Key to Symbols see back flap

Madurai: Minakshi Sundareshvara Temple

This enormous temple complex is dedicated to Shiva, known here as Sundareshvara (the "Handsome God"), and his consort Parvati or Minakshi (the "Fish-eyed Goddess"). Originally built by the early Pandyas (7th–10th centuries), it was extensively added to by succeeding dynasties, especially between the 14th and 18th centuries. The temple complex is within a high-walled enclosure, at the core of which are the two sanctums for Minakshi and Sundareshvara, surrounded by a number of smaller shrines and grand pillared halls. Especially impressive are the 12 *gopuras*. Their soaring towers rise from solid granite bases, and are covered with stucco figures of deities, mythical animals and monsters, painted in vivid colours.

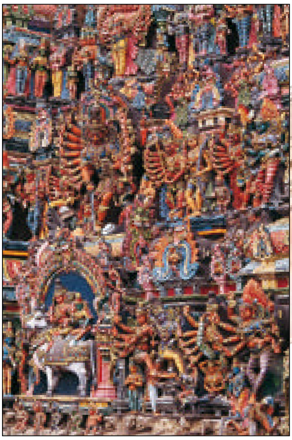




Guardian Deities
Fierce monster images, with protruding eyes and horns, mark the arched ends of the vaulted roofs, and serve as guardian deities.

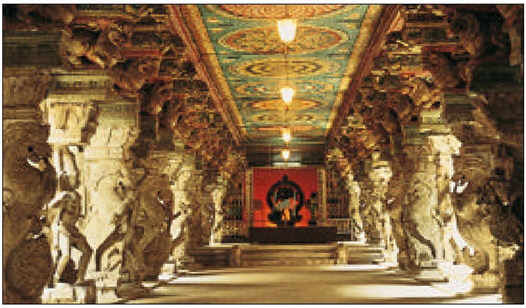
GOPURA

Pyramidal gates *(gopuras)* rise to a height of more than 50 m (164 ft). These towering gateways indicate the entrance to the temple complex at the four cardinal points, while lesser *gopuras* lead to the sanctums of the main deities.



Stucco Work
The figures of deities on the tower are repaired, repainted and ritually reconsecrated every 12 years.

Openings in the middle of the long sides allow light to enter the hollow chambers at each level.



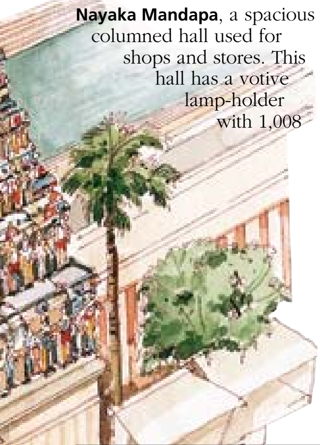
The profusely carved pillars of the Thousand-Pillared Hall

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Chitrai St. ***Tel*** *(0452) 234 4360.* ○ *daily. Non-Hindus not allowed inside the sanctum.* 📷 *extra charges.* 🎉 *Chitirai Festival (mid-Apr), Avanimoolam (Aug/Sep).* **Museum** ○ *daily.* ♿ 📷 *extra charges.*

Exploring the Minakshi Temple

The temple is entered from the eastern side through the **Ashta Shakti Mandapa** or the “Hall of Eight Goddesses”, with sculpted pillars representing the various aspects of the Goddess Shakti. Next to this hall is the **Minakshi Nayaka Mandapa**, a spacious columned hall used for shops and stores. This hall has a votive lamp-holder with 1,008 lamps, which are lit on festive occasions and present a spectacular sight.



The adjacent seven-storeyed **Chitra Gopura**, is the tallest tower in the complex. Next to it is the **Potramarai Kulam**, or “Golden Lotus” Tank, with steps leading down to the water. It is surrounded by pillared corridors that once bore paintings from the Vijayanagar period. To the west of this tank is the **Minakshi Shrine**, one of the two main shrines, comprising two concentric corridors and many halls and galleries. Here lies the bed to which Minakshi’s “husband”, in the form of Sundareshvara’s image, is brought every night from his own shrine, the **Sundareshvara Shrine**, which stands to the north. The god resides in this, the second main shrine, amid columns that bear the fish motifs emblematic of his wife.

The 16th-century “Flagpole Hall” or **Kambattadi Man-dapa**, in front of this shrine, has a pavilion with a seated Nandi, a gilded flagpole and ornately carved pillars depicting the 24 forms of Shiva.

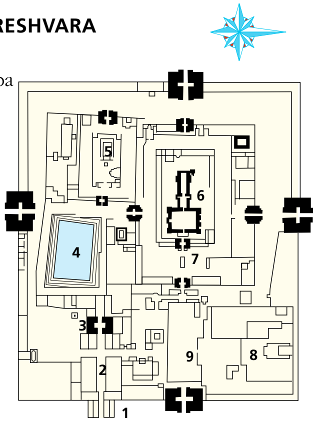
To its east is the **Thousand-Pillared Hall** with 985 beautifully decorated columns. Dating to the 16th century, this hall is now a museum, which displays bronze and stone images. A set of pillars, a marvel in stone, produce the seven notes of Carnatic music. The **Kalyana Mandapa**, to the south of the pillared hall, is where the marriage of Shiva and Parvati is celebrated every year during the Chitirai Festival in mid-April.

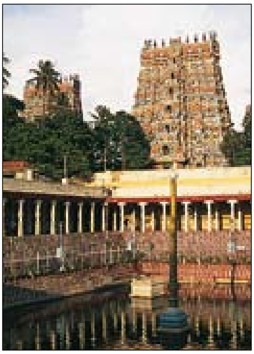
Kalyana Sundara**, Vishnu giving Minakshi to Shiva**

Pudumandapa, the 100-m (328-ft) long “New Hall” with portrait sculptures of the Nayaka rulers, is outside the main temple complex. Built by Tirumalai Nayaka in 1635, it now houses a market selling saris, jewellery and spices.

MINAKSHI SUNDARESHVARA TEMPLE COMPLEX

1. Ashta Shakti Mandapa
2. Minakshi Nayaka Mandapa
3. Chitra Gopura
4. Potramarai Kulam
5. Minakshi Shrine
6. Sundareshvara Shrine
7. Kambattadi Mandapa
8. Thousand-Pillared Hall
9. Kalyana Mandapa





The Potramarai Kulam, surrounded by a colonnade

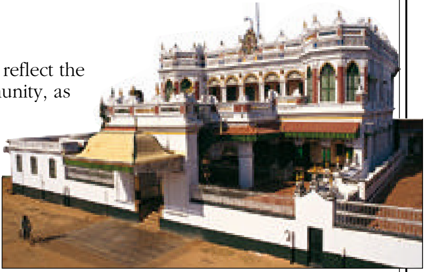
Chettiar Mansions

An arched passageway

The arid region encompassing the towns of Karaikudi, Devakottai and their neighbouring villages, collectively known as Chettinad, is distinguished by large ornate mansions which are the ancestral homes of the Chettiars, Tamil Nadu's rich merchant community. Like the Marwaris of Shekhavati *(see pp372–3)*, the Chettiars were astute businessmen who travelled far to make their fortunes. The wealth they acquired in Burma, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, and Vietnam was used to build these elaborate mansions. Today, the Chettiars are prominent bankers and industrialists based in Chennai and Bangalore.

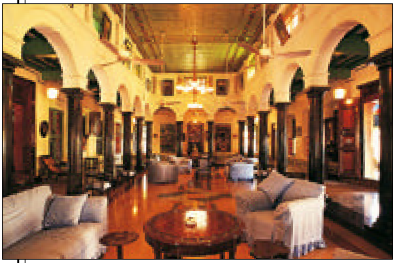
CHETTIAR HOUSES

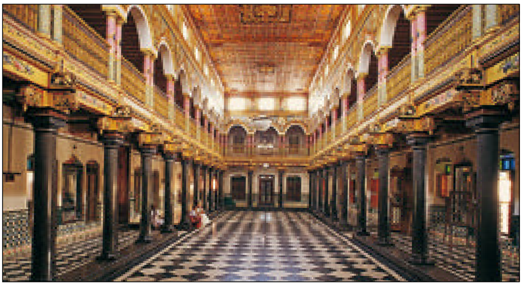
Built in the early 20th century, these houses reflect the social, ritual and kinship needs of the community, as well as its economic status. Though now unoccupied for most of the year, they are still used for family celebrations.


The splendid Chettinad Palace, Karaikudi

A long verandah *with wooden pillars leads to a series of open courtyards, surrounded by rooms to accommodate the growing family.*

The first pillared hall, *where each pillar is made from an entire tree trunk of Burma teak, is reserved for the men of the house to receive guests and conduct business.*


The formal reception room *has marble floors, stained-glass windows, painted cornices, teak and rosewood furniture and ornate chandeliers.*


Elaborate marble floors, *well-polished doorways, carved wooden beams, granite pillars, and other decorative elements in a Chettiar house display the skills of the Tamil craftsmen.*

Intricately carved wooden doorway

Chettinad ㉓

Chettinad district. 82 km (51 miles) NE of Madurai. 🚆 🚌 ⊖ *daily.*
🎉 *Bullock Races (Jan/Feb).*

Karaikudi, the heart of the Chettinad area, has several temples, including the 7th-century **Pillaiyarpati Temple** dedicated to Lord Ganesha. It also has fine Chettiar mansions, and antique shops stocked with treasures from these mansions. Chettinad is famous for its hot, spicy, non-vegetarian cuisine – pepper chicken is one of the most popular dishes. The food is prepared in copper vessels and served on plantain leaves.

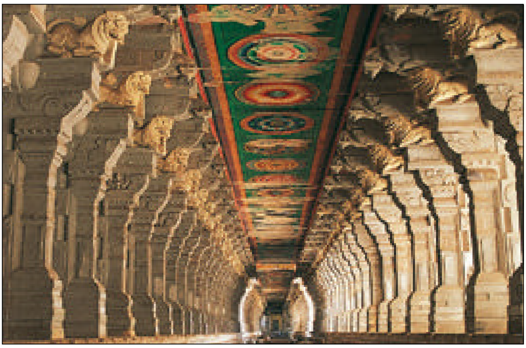
Ramanathapuram ㉔

Ramanathapuram district. 117 km (73 miles) SE of Madurai. 👥 *62,000.* 🚆 🚌 ⊖ *daily.* 🎉 *Urs at Erwadi Dargah (Dec).*

This ancient town is associated with the Setupatis, local rulers who rose to prominence in the late 17th century under the Madurai Nayakas. They derived prestige and income by controlling the isthmus that led to Rameshvaram island. A century later, their rule came to an end when they surrendered to the East India Company in 1792.

To the west of the present town is the palace complex of the Setupatis. Though little remains, the 17th-century **Ramalinga Vilas**, on the north side of the palace complex, still has well-preserved wall paintings. These depict the epics as well as battle scenes, business transactions and royal ceremonies. The upper chambers depict more private royal scenes, such as family gatherings, music and dance recitals, and hunting expeditions. A small shrine, facing north, is dedicated to the family goddess of the Setupatis, Rajarajeshvari. It stands immediately south of the Ramalinga Vilas.

On the outskirts of the town is the 800-year-old **Erwadi Dargah**, housing the tomb of Ibrahim Syed Aulia, a Muslim saint. It attracts devotees from all over India, as well as from Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Singapore during its annual festival in December.



The longest corridor at Ramanathaswamy Temple, with sculpted pillars

Rameshvaram ㉕

Ramanathapuram district. 163 km (101 miles) SE of Madurai.
👥 *38,050.* 🚆 🚌 ℹ *Tourist office, East Car Street, (04573) 221 064.*
🎉 *Ramalinga (Jun/Jul).*

A major pilgrimage site, the sacred island of Rameshvaram juts out into the Gulf of Mannar, the narrow body of water separating Tamil Nadu from Sri Lanka.

The **Ramanathaswamy Temple**, in the middle of the island, is dedicated to Shiva. It houses the linga that Lord Rama, the hero of the epic *Ramayana (see p27)*, is said to have installed and worshipped after his victory against Ravana in Lanka. Founded by the Chola rulers but expanded extensively during the Nayaka period, in the 16th to 18th centuries, this massive temple is enclosed within a high wall with five *gopuras*. The most remarkable feature of this temple is the **Sokkattan Mandapa**, so called because it resembles a *sokkattan* (dice) in shape. It surrounds the core of the temple on four sides in a continuous corridor, and is the largest and most elaborate of its kind, with 1,212 pillars extending 197 m (646 ft) from east to west and 133 m (436 ft) from north to south. The complex also has a staggering 22 *tirthas* (tanks) for ritual ablutions; it is believed that a dip in the Agni Tirtha, in front of the temple, removes all sins. The installation ceremony of the linga by Rama and Sita is celebrated every year.

Devotees taking a dip in the holy waters of the Agni Tirtha

Standing on **Gandamadana Hill**, the highest point of the island, 3 km (2 miles) north-west of the Ramanathaswamy Temple, is a two-storeyed *mandapa* that is said to shelter the footprint of Rama.

Dhanushkodi ("Rama's Bow"), the southern-most tip of Rameshvaram, about 18 km (11 miles) from the main temple, has a spectacular beach. From here, a series of boulders, known as Adam's Bridge, can be seen extending far into the horizon. These are believed to have been used by Hanuman when he crossed the ocean in search of Sita. The Kodandarama Temple, on the shore, is said to be where Ravana's brother surrendered to Rama. Miraculously, the temple survived a devastating cyclone in 1964.

Tuticorin ㉖

Tuticorin district. 135 km (84 miles) S of Madurai. 👥 *216,100.* 🚆 🚌 🎉 *Golden Chariot Festival (Aug).*

This is Tamil Nadu's second largest natural harbour, and the main port of call for ships from Southeast Asia, Australia and New Zealand. Tuticorin is also a major industrial centre with thermal power stations, spinning mills and salt extraction units.

The city's other important commercial activity is pearl fishing. Since the early centuries of the Christian era, this region's pearls have been in demand throughout the world. Ancient Tamil literature mentions a flourishing trade with the Romans, who bought Tuticorin pearls in exchange for gold and wine.

Today the government, which has set up a society of divers, strictly regulates pearl fishing, in order to protect the oyster beds – sometimes pearl fishing is allowed only once in ten years. The pearl fishers still use traditional methods, diving to a depth of up to 70 m (230 ft) without oxygen to extricate the pearls. Most divers can remain underwater for more than a minute; their only safeguard against accidents or natural danger is to dive in pairs.

Tuticorin was occupied by the Portuguese in the 17th century and later by the Dutch and the British. Its colonial past is visible in two elegant churches, the Dutch **Sacred Heart Cathedral**, built in the mid-18th century, and the beautiful 17th-century **Church of the Lady of the Snows**, built by the Portuguese.

Corridor of the Kanthimathi Nellaiyappar Temple, Tirunelveli

Tiruchendur ㉗

Tuticorin district. 223 km (139 miles) S of Madurai. 🚆 🚌 *from Madurai, Tirunelveli, Tuticorin & Nagercoil.* 🎉 *Annual Temple Festival (Jun/Jul).*

This beautiful coastal town, one of the six sacred abodes of Shiva's son, Murugan *(see p606)*, has the impressive **Subramanyam Temple**. Dating to the 9th century, it was renovated in the 20th century. The temple, entered through the towering Mela *gopura*, is built on a rocky promontory overlooking the Gulf of Mannar, and provides lovely views. On the seashore there are many caves and rock-cut sculptures.

Environs

Manapad, 18 km (11 miles) south, has one of the oldest churches in India, the Church of the Holy Cross. Built in 1581, it preserves a fragment of the "True Cross", brought from Jerusalem. An annual festival held every September attracts pilgrims from all over the region. St Francis Xavier visited this coastal village in 1542.

The Church of the Holy Cross in Manapad

Tirunelvelli ㉘

Tirunelvelli district. 154 km (96 miles) SW of Madurai. 🚆 🚌 ℹ *Tamil Nadu Tourism, Tirunelvelli Junction, (0462) 250 0104.* 🎉 *Chariot Festival (Jun/Jul).*

Situated in the fertile tract by the Tamaraparani river, Tirunelvelli is dominated by the **Kanthimathi Nellaiyappar Temple**, parts of which date to the 13th century. This complex of twin temples, dedicated to Shiva and Parvati, has two huge rectangular enclosures connected by a long corridor. The Shiva temple is to the north, while the Parvati temple is to the south. The elaborate *mandapas* here include the Somavara Mandapa, which contains two pillars carved like *gopuras*; the Rishaba Mandapa, with exquisitely carved sculptures of Manmatha, the God of Love, and his consort Rathi; and the Mani Mandapa, with a set of stone pillars that produce the melodic notes of Carnatic music *(see p595)* when tapped.

Every summer, the temple's wooden chariots are led in procession through the town during the annual Chariot Festival, which attracts thousands of devotees.

Environs

Courtallam (Kuttalam) Falls, at an elevation of 170 m (558 ft), are 59 km (37 miles) northwest of Tirunelvelli. This picturesque spot is famed for its exotic flora and the medicinal properties of its waters.

Sthanumalaya Temple at Suchindram, overlooking the temple tank

Suchindram ㉙

Kanniyakumari district. 247 km (154 miles) S of Madurai. 🚆 *Nagarcoil, 5 km (3 miles) NW of town centre, then bus.* 🚌 🎉 *Arudhra Festival (Dec/Jan).*

This small temple town is closely linked with the legend of Kumari, the Virgin Goddess (an incarnation of Parvati). It is believed that Shiva rested at this quiet spot by the banks of the Pelayar river, while the goddess Kumari performed her penance at Kanniyakumari.

Suchindram's unique **Sthanumalaya Temple** is dedicated to the Hindu Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. The rectangular complex has enormous, brightly coloured *gopuras* dating from the 17th–18th centuries, which depict stories from the great epics *(see pp26–7)*. One of the two main shrines, built in the 13th century, contains the Sthanumalaya linga, which symbolizes Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. The other is dedicated to Vishnu, whose image is made of a special kind of jaggery and mustard.

The temple also boasts a set of musical pillars made from single blocks of granite. When tapped, each pillar produces a different musical note. Other highlights are a 5-m (16-ft) high statue of Hanuman placed opposite the Rama shrine, and the exquisite sculptures in the Vasantha Mandapa. A special *puja* is held here every Friday evening, with music and a procession. In the complex is an ancient banyan tree, and a sculpture of Shiva's bull, Nandi, which locals believe actually continues to grow.

Kanniyakumari ㉚

Kanniyakumari district. 235 km (146 miles) S of Madurai. 👥 *19,700.* 🚆 🚌 ℹ *Tamil Nadu Tourism, Beach Rd, (04652) 246 257.* 🎉 *Chaitra Purnima (Apr), Navaratri (Sep/Oct).*

The southernmost tip of the Indian subcontinent, where the Indian Ocean, the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal meet, Kanniyakumari enchants visitors with its spectacular views, especially at sunrise and sunset. The most breathtaking of these occurs on Chaitra Purnima (the full moon night in April) when both sunset and moonrise occur at the same time.

Kanniyakumari is believed to be the abode of Kumari, the Virgin Goddess, who is supposed to have done penance here so that she could marry Shiva. The marriage, however, did not take place, since it was deemed that she remain a virgin in order to save the world. Her temple, the **Kumari Amman Temple**, a popular pilgrimage centre on the seashore, was built by the Pandya kings in the 8th century and was extensively renovated by the Chola, Vijayanagar and Nayaka rulers.

A magnificent structure, the temple has a Navaratri Mandapa with a beautifully painted panel of Mahishasuramardini (Durga killing the demon Mahisha). An 18th-century shrine within the temple contains the footprints *(sripadaparai)* of the goddess Kumari, who performed her penance at this spot.

The **Gandhi Memorial**, near the temple, is where Mahatma Gandhi's ashes were kept before immersion. The building is designed so that every year on October 2nd (Gandhi's birthday), at midday, the rays of the sun fall on the exact spot where his ashes were placed.

Just off the coast, on a rocky island, the **Vivekananda Memorial** marks the spot where the great Indian philosopher, Swami Vivekananda *(see p286)* meditated before attending the World Religious Conference in Chicago in 1893. Near the memorial is the imposing 40-m (131-ft) high statue of Tiruvalluvar, the 1st-century BC Tamil poet, who wrote the epic *Tirukural*, often referred to as one of the greatest classics of Tamil literature.

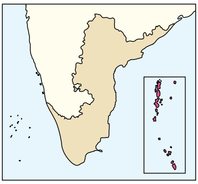
The **Church of Our Lady of Joy**, which was founded by St Francis Xavier in the 1540s, is located at the southern edge of the town. Other attractions include the sandy beaches and the multi-coloured granite rocks.

Kumari Amman Temple
○ *daily.* ● *Sanctum closed to non-Hindus.*

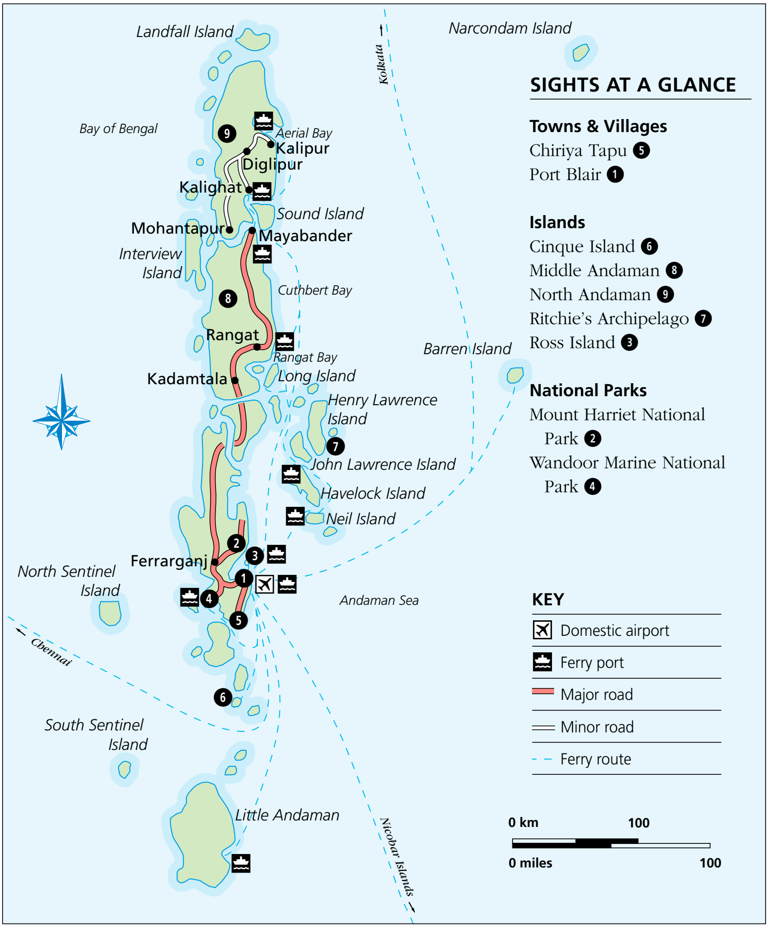
🏛 **Vivekananda Memorial**
○ *Wed–Mon.* 💰 ⛴ *every 30 min.*

A statue of the poet Tiruvalluvar, on the beach at Kanniyakumari

ANDAMAN ISLANDS



An archipelago of 572 idyllic islands in the Bay of Bengal, about 1,000 km (620 miles) from the mainland, the Andamans and the neighbouring Nicobar Islands are actually the peaks of a submerged mountain range which extends from Myanmar to Indonesia. They encompass three distinct ecosystems – tropical forests, mangroves and coral reefs, which support a staggering variety of plant and animal life. Foreign visitors require a permit *(see p758)*, and are not allowed on the Nicobar Islands. Many parts of the Andamans, too, are off-limits, to preserve their rare biodiversity and protect the six tribal groups, some of whom are fiercely independent. Their hostility was probably the reason why Marco Polo described the islands as being inhabited by cannibals. The Andamans acquired the sinister name Kala Pani ("Black Waters") in the 19th century, when the British established a penal colony here. The islands were severely hit by the tsunami waves in December 2004. Their permanent population includes migrant Indians, Bangladeshis, Sri Lankans and Karens from Myanmar. The surrounding reefs are ideal for water sports.



Landfall Island
Narcondam Island
Kolkata
Bay of Bengal
Aerial Bay
Kalipur
Diglipur
Kalighat
Sound Island
Mohantapur
Mayabander
Interview Island
Cuthbert Bay
Rangat
Rangat Bay
Barren Island
Kadamtala
Long Island
Henry Lawrence Island
John Lawrence Island
Havelock Island
Neil Island
North Sentinel Island
Ferrarganj
Andaman Sea
Chennai
South Sentinel Island
Little Andaman
Nicobar Islands
0 km 100
0 miles 100

SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

Towns & Villages
Chiriya Tapu ⑤
Port Blair ①

Islands
Cinque Island ⑥
Middle Andaman ⑧
North Andaman ⑨
Ritchie's Archipelago ⑦
Ross Island ③

National Parks
Mount Harriet National Park ②
Wandoor Marine National Park ④

KEY

- ☒ Domestic airport
- ⛴ Ferry port
- ━ Major road
- ═ Minor road
- - - Ferry route

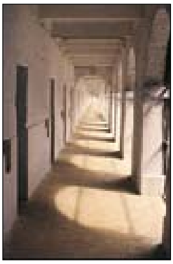
◁ **An island in the Andamans covered by a dense, evergreen canopy of trees, surrounded by crystal waters**

An aerial view of the capital, Port Blair

Port Blair ❶

South Andaman Island. 1,190 km (739 miles) E of Chennai. 👥 *100,200.* ✈ *3 km (2 miles) S of town centre, then bus or taxi.* ⛴ ℹ *Govt of India Tourist Office, Junglighat Rd, (03192) 233 006; Andaman & Nicobar Tourism, (03192) 230 933.* **Travel permits** *are required for the Andaman Islands* (see p758). 🎉 *Island Tourism Festival (Dec/Jan).*

The capital, Port Blair, is located to the southeast of South Andaman Island. The town is a base from which to travel around the archipelago, and is well equipped with hotels, banks, tour operators and sports complexes.



A row of tiny cells, Cellular Jail

The town's tumultuous history began in 1789, when Lieutenant Archibald Blair of the British East India Company conducted a survey to identify a safe harbour for the Company's vessels. He chose the site of what is now Port Blair. Fifty years later the islands became a penal colony. Those incarcerated were political activists involved in the Indian Mutiny of 1857 *(see p53)*; by 1864, the number of prisoners had grown from 773 to 3,000. In 1896, the construction of the **Cellular Jail** began; it soon became an infamous symbol of colonial oppression. Designed specifically for solitary confinement, it earned the Islands the dreaded name of Kala Pani or "Black Waters", reflecting the atrocities that awaited the prisoners. It remains Port Blair's most prominent landmark.

Of the original seven wings laid out around a central watchtower, only four remain; three have been converted into a hospital and are lined with cells, each 3 by 3.5 m (10 by 11 ft) in size. Daily rations consisted of two cups of drinking water and two cups of rice. Executions were frequent and many were made to undergo hard labour. Japanese troops, who occupied the Islands during World War II, destroyed part of the prison. In 1945, the British moved back, re-established their headquarters at Port Blair and closed the jail. It is now a memorial to the political prisoners; a moving sound and light show is held here every evening. The town's other places of interest are scattered around Aberdeen Bazaar, on the east side of town. The **Anthropological Museum**, west of the bazaar, sheds light on the islands' tribal inhabitants and has a collection of rare photographs taken in the 1960s. The Aquarium, also known as the **Fisheries Museum**, at the eastern end of MG Road, displays hundreds of species of unusual fish, corals and shells. Next door, the **Andaman Water Sports Complex** offers a range of activities, including windsurfing and parasailing, and also hires out row boats and rubber dinghies. The **Samudrika Marine Museum**, run by the Indian Navy, has five galleries devoted to the history, geography and anthropology of the Islands, and has a superb display on marine life. The tiny zoo at Haddo has successfully bred saltwater crocodiles and returned them to the wild. At the **Forest Museum** nearby, different varieties of local wood are on display.

Chatham Sawmills on Chatham Island, 5 km (3 miles) north, is one of the oldest and largest saw mills in Asia. Established by the British in 1836, this is where many of the Islands' fast disappearing species of trees, including the towering *padauk* (Andaman redwood), are processed.

⌂ Cellular Jail
Son et Lumière *6–7pm (Hindi), daily. 7–8pm (English), daily.* 🎟

🏛 Anthropological Museum
○ *Tue–Sun.* ● *public hols.*

🏛 Fisheries Museum
Tel *(03192) 232 291.* ○ *Tue–Sun.* ● *public hols.* 🎟

⛵ Andaman Water Sports Complex
Tel *(03192) 230 799.* ○ *daily.*

🏛 Samudrika Marine Museum
Tel *(03192) 232 871.* ○ *Tue–Sun.* 🎟

🏛 Forest Museum
○ *Tue–Sun.* ● *public hols.*

Chatham Sawmills
○ *Mon–Sat, mornings are best.* ⊘

The day's catch, a boatful of fresh crayfish

Environs
The nearest beach from Port Blair is the crescent shaped **Corbyn's Cove**, 7 km (4 miles) south of the capital. **Viper Island**, named after a 19th-century British shipping vessel that was wrecked off its shore, can be reached via a cruise from Port Blair. Its sinister history involves the local prison, built in 1867, whose macabre gallows and torture posts can still be seen. Only daytime visits are allowed as the island has no inhabitants. About 15 km (9 miles) from Port Blair lies **Sippyghat Farm**, where many varieties of spices and indigenous plants and shrubs are grown.

Orchid

Mount Harriet National Park ❷

South Andaman Island. 10 km (6 miles) N of Port Blair. ⛴ *From Chatham Wharf or Phoenix Bay Jetty (Fisheries Jetty) in Port Blair to Bamboo Flats Jetty, then taxi to park entry point. Tickets for day visits are available at entrance.*

Some of the Andamans' highest peaks are in Mount Harriet National Park, lying across the inlet from Phoenix Jetty in Port Blair. Mount Harriet, at 365 m (1,198 ft), is surrounded by evergreen forests that support a remarkable biodiversity, predominantly birds such as the great black woodpecker and the green imperial pigeon. Well-marked hiking trails include the 2-km (1-mile) walk to Kalapathar, and the 16-km (10-mile) trail to Madhuban Beach, where elephants are trained for lumbering. Beware of leeches during the monsoon.

The **Forest Guest House**, on top of Mount Harriet, offers fine views of Port Blair and Ross Island. Visits and overnight stays are possible with permission from the Wildlife Warden *(see p621)*.

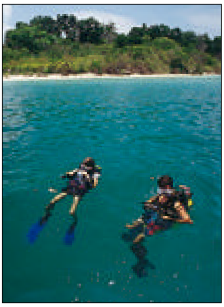
Ross Island ❸

Ross Island. 2 km (1 mile) E of Port Blair. ⛴ *from Phoenix Jetty.* **Travel permits** *required for the Andamans* (see p758). *Only day trips allowed.*

A short ferry ride from Port Blair leads to Ross Island, which served as the administrative capital for most of the Andaman Islands from 1858 until 1941. Ross Island's history, however, is much older, for it was the home of the indigenous Great Andamanese *(see p623)*. Within 20 years of British occupation, diseases such as syphilis and measles virtually wiped out the tribe, whose numbers dropped from 5,000 to just 28. Ross Island was also the base for the British administrators of the penal colony in Port Blair, and was equipped with swimming pools and bungalows. In 1941, the Japanese converted the site into a POW camp, and built war installations, remnants of which can still be seen. It now lies deserted, and the few signs of its colonial glory, such as the chief commissioner's house and the Anglican church, are dilapidated and overgrown. The area is now under the control of the Indian Navy, whose museum, Smritika, records the lives of its political prisoners.

The rare Narcondam hornbill

SNORKELLING AND SCUBA DIVING



Snorkelling, a popular way to explore marine life

Snorkelling
Snorkels can be hired out for around Rs 70 per day from numerous tour operators including the Andaman Water Sports Complex in Port Blair. Popular venues are Corbyn's Cove, Wandoor, Chiriya Tapu, Neil and Havelock Islands.

Scuba Diving
There are two registered dive centres in Port Blair. Samudra, (03192) 227 824, in Hotel Sinclair Bay View, is well established, and charges Rs 2,500 for a couple of dives near Port Blair, Rs 3,500 for areas further than Wandoor. It also runs diving courses. Port Blair Underwater, (03192) 229 312, at Peerless Resort in Corbyn's Cove also offers diving courses. The recently opened Andaman Scuba Club on Havelock Island, is a pretty resort on the beach.
www.andamanscubaclub.com

Eco-friendly Diving
Coral reefs are sensitive and even the gentlest touch can kill them. So avoid touching or treading on them, and be careful with your flippers. Practise descending into the sea before the actual dive, as descent is often too fast, leading to collision with reefs. Do not use anchors near reefs.

Wandoor Marine National Park ④

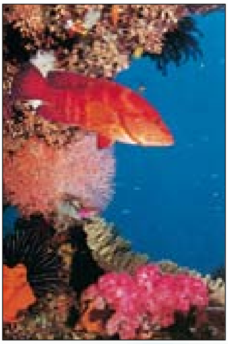
Created in 1983 to preserve the tropical ecosystems of 15 uninhabited islands in the Andamans, the Mahatma Gandhi Marine National Park at Wandoor stretches over 280 sq km (108 sq miles). It encompasses myriad bays, coral reefs, lagoons, rainforests and mangrove creeks. Ferries from Wandoor village skirt lagoons with kaleidoscopic sea beds, and are often chased by schools of playful dolphins. Most of the islands are protected and are therefore inaccessible; however, their coasts reveal a fascinating transition from towering tropical canopies to stilted mangroves. The only islands that allow visits are Jolly Buoy Island, which is ideal for snorkelling, and Redskin Island, with a well-marked nature trail. Unfortunately, the December 2004 tsunami caused widespread destruction of coral reefs in Jolly Buoy.

Types of Coral
Corals are of two broad types – either hard or soft. The colourful soft coral has no outer skeleton.

Angelfish
The angelfish is one of the reef's most vividly coloured fish. Its bright hues help to camouflage it as well as to advertise its territory.

Lion or Scorpion Fish
Measuring up to 40 cm (16 in), this ornate fish has deadly venom in its rays, which can be fatal for humans.

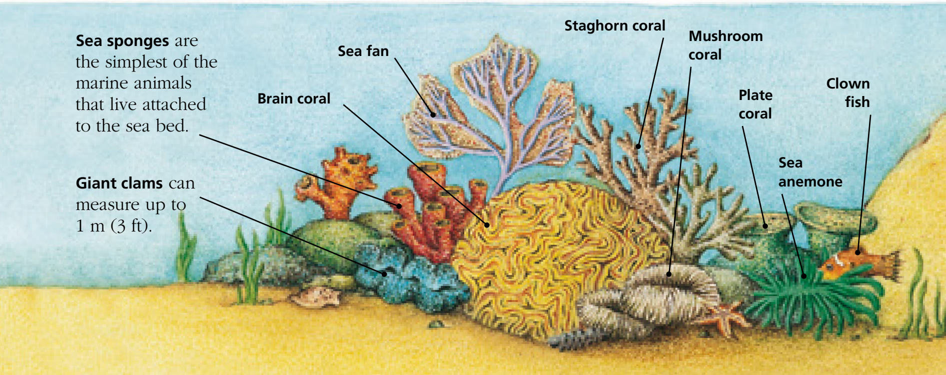
Giant Robber Crab
One of the largest and rarest crabs in the world, its powerful claws help it to climb trees such as the coconut palm, and break the hard shell of its fruit.



Grouper Fish
Among the most commonly found species, groupers can change their colour to match the rocks and surrounding reefs.

THE CORAL REEF

Referred to as rainforests of the sea, the multi-coloured reefs are delicate ecosystems that support an amazing variety of marine life *(see p647)*, and over 200 species of coral.

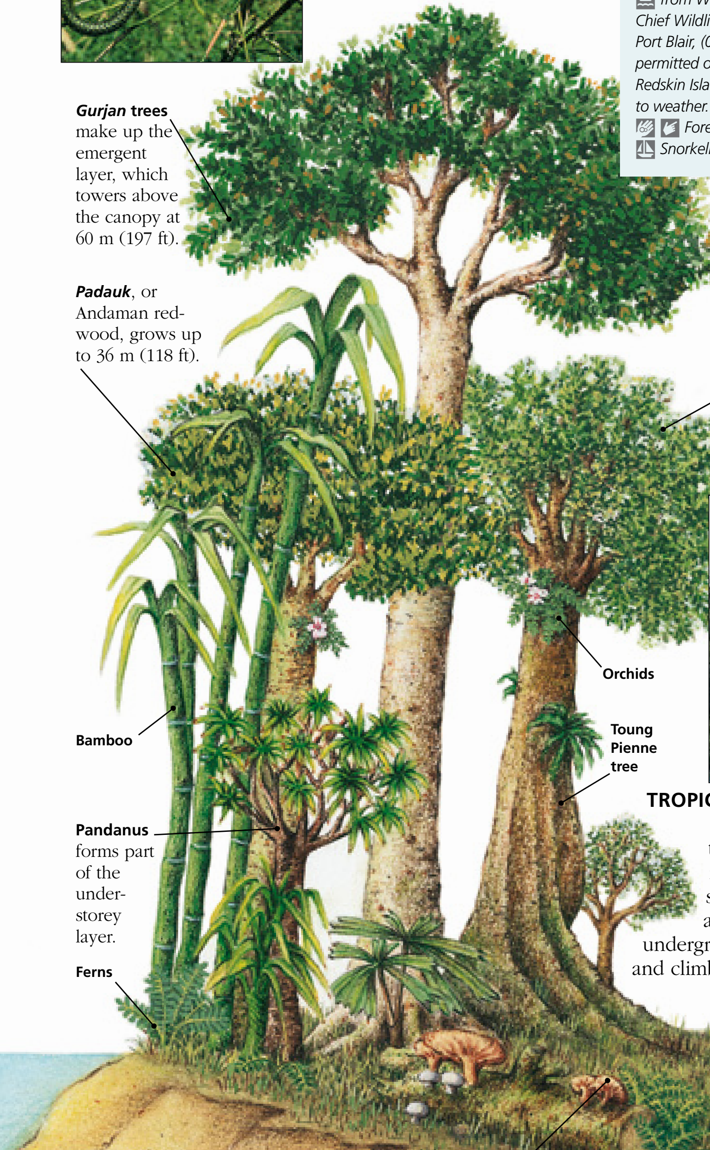


Sea sponges are the simplest of the marine animals that live attached to the sea bed.
Giant clams can measure up to 1 m (3 ft).
Brain coral
Sea fan
Staghorn coral
Mushroom coral
Plate coral
Sea anemone
Clown fish

Green Tree Snake
One of the 40-odd species found here, this harmless snake has no fangs and eats reptiles and frogs.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

South Andaman Island. 29 km (18 miles) SW of Port Blair. 🚌 ⛴ *from Wandoor village.* ℹ *Chief Wildlife Warden, Haddo, Port Blair, (03192) 233 549. Entry permitted only to Jolly Buoy & Redskin Islands.* ○ *daily, subject to weather. Best time: Dec–Mar.* 🍴 🛏 *Forest Lodge has 4 suites.* ⛵ *Snorkelling & scuba diving.*



***Gurjan* trees** make up the emergent layer, which towers above the canopy at 60 m (197 ft).

Padauk, or Andaman red-wood, grows up to 36 m (118 ft).

The second layer, known as the canopy, with trees such as the *padauk*, absorbs most of the sunlight.

Orchids

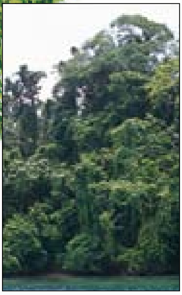
Toung Pienne tree

Bamboo

Pandanus forms part of the under-storey layer.

Ferns

Mushrooms



TROPICAL RAINFOREST

The multi-layered tropical rainforests include giant trees such as the *gurjan* and *padauk*, a rich undergrowth of epiphytes and climbers, and over 120 species of ferns.

Mangroves
Dense mangrove forests grow along the waterlogged creeks of Wandoor's islands, and support a variety of fauna such as snakes, crabs, crocodiles and waterfowl.

A boat gliding across the glass-like surface of a lagoon, Andamans

Chiriya Tapu ❺

South Andaman Island. 28 km (17 miles) S of Port Blair. 🚌 ⛴ *from Port Blair. Taxis available from Port Blair.*

The fishing village of Chiriya Tapu ("Bird Island"), at the southernmost tip of South Andaman Island, is an hour's drive from Port Blair. Its white beaches, skirting a large bay, make it a popular day trip with visitors.

Forest trails through the surrounding tropical undergrowth are a birdwatcher's delight, as they teem with a vast variety of species, including rare sunbirds, kingfishers, woodpeckers and eagles. Its beaches, especially the picturesque **Munde Pahar Beach**, are excellent for snorkelling, and there are good camping facilities as well. The forest department is setting up a biological park, to house the animals from Port Blair's zoo *(see p618).*

Cinque Island ❻

Cinque Island. 39 km (24 miles) S of Port Blair. ⛴ *motor boats from Port Blair & Wandoor, ferries from Chiriya Tapu.* **Travel permits** *required for the Andamans* (see p758). *Only day visits are allowed.*

The volcanic Cinque Island is perhaps the most beautiful of the entire Andamans group, as it has had little human interference over the years and is mostly uninhabited. Comprising two islands, North and South Cinque, connected by a sand bar, it was declared a sanctuary in 1987. The surrounding reefs of rare coral and varied marine life offer some of the best snorkelling and scuba diving in the Andamans. The sandy shores are also among the last refuges of the hawksbill and green sea turtles, which nest here annually in their hundreds.

Environs

Tiny groups of islands known as the **Sisters** and the **Brothers**, lying 12 km (7 miles) and 32 km (20 miles) south of Cinque respectively, can be visited only with a professional diving group. Large tracts of the remote southern island of **Little Andaman**, 70 km (44 miles) and eight hours by ferry from Port Blair, are a reserve for the 100-odd surviving members of the Onge tribe. It is not advisable to try and make contact with them. Part of northern Little Andaman is open to visitors.

Little Andaman
⛴ *twice a week from Port Blair.*

A hermit crab digging a temporary home

Ritchie's Archipelago ❼

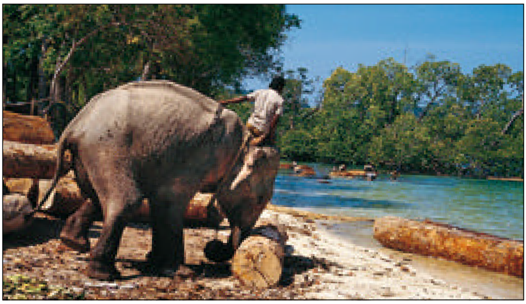
The group of islands lies between 20 km (12 miles) & 40 km (25 miles) E of South Andaman. ⛴ *from Port Blair & Rangat Bay (Middle Andaman).* **Travel permits** *required for the Andamans* (see p758).

This cluster of tiny islands, collectively known as Ritchie's Archipelago, are for the most part protected as national parks to preserve their remarkable biodiversity. Only three islands are open to visitors and are connected to Port Blair by ferry on specific days of the week.

Neil Island, 36 km (22 miles) northeast, is the closest to the capital and is inhabited by settlers from Bengal. The interior is lush with paddy fields and plantations; the island is the region's main producer of fresh fruit and vegetables. The relatively untouched beaches offer superb snorkelling opportunities.

Havelock Island, 54 km (34 miles) northeast of Port Blair, is the most popular among visitors as it is well equipped, with government and private guesthouses, and also has a well-stocked main bazaar. It is worth trying out the tented accommodation on Radhanagar Beach, at the western tip of the island, where dolphins and turtles can be spotted from the long stretches of white sand. The elephants found on the island

A colourful sea fan and a grouper fish



Elephants, indispensable to the islands' lumber trade

were originally brought here to work the timber trade. Bikes and scooters are available and are the best way to explore.

The northernmost island in the archipelago, **Long Island**, 82 km (51 miles) north of Port Blair, attracts few visitors, perhaps because of the eight-hour journey to get there. It nevertheless has attractive beaches. There is just one rest house and virtually no public transport available, although bicycles can be hired. North Passage Island, 55 km (34 miles) S of Port Blair, has a beautiful white sandy beach at Merk Bay.

Environs

Barren Island, 132 km (82 miles) northeast of Port Blair, has the only active volcano in India. It erupted twice in recent years, first in 1991 and then in 1994, after lying dormant for nearly two centuries. Rising sharply from the sea, its enormous crater continues to spew smoke. The island is now a wildlife sanctuary. There is no public ferry service and only chartered ferries make the long, 20-hour journey from Port Blair. Since landing on the island is not permitted, divers are the only visitors, drawn here by the rich marine life.

A vividly coloured local pineapple

INDIGENOUS TRIBES

Until the 18th century, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands were inhabited by 12 distinct groups of aboriginal tribes. Now, overwhelmed by the immigrant population and threatened by disease and loss of land, their numbers have fallen from 5,000 to just 400. The Mongoloid Nicobarese and Shompen tribes of the Nicobars probably migrated from Myanmar, while the origins of the four Negrito tribes, the Jarawas, Great Andamanese, Onges and Sentinelese, continue to baffle anthropologists. Of these, only the largest – the Nicobarese – have partially integrated into the mainstream, while the Onges and the Great Andamanese, now increasingly dependent on subsidies, live in tribal "reserves". The Sentinelese from North Sentinel Island, are still hostile, fending off strangers with showers of arrows. The Shompens of Great Nicobar are as wary of outsiders. Most tribal groups survived the December 2004 tsunami, by following their own early warning systems. As the last representatives of truly independent indigenous peoples, perhaps their only chance of survival remains in self-imposed isolation.

A Jarawa tribesman

Middle Andaman ❽

Middle Andaman Island. 170 km (106 miles) N from Port Blair to Rangat. ⛴ *from Port Blair.* **Travel permits** *required for the Andamans* (see p758).

This is literally the middle island among the Andamans trio. Large tracts of its interior are a part of the highly protected Jarawa Tribal Reserve. The Jarawas, traditional hunter-gatherers, are probably the last racially pure tribe left in India. The Andaman Trunk Road winds along the island's spine, running from Port Blair through Bharatrang Island to Middle Andaman. But with the welfare of the Jarawas in mind, only restricted public transport is encouraged. The area around **Rangat** is lush with tropical forests; the town itself has only a few provision stores. **Rangat Bay** is the point of departure for ferries to Port Blair and Havelock and Long Islands. Just 15 km (9 miles) away, **Cuthbert Bay** is a sanctuary for hundreds of marine turtles, which arrive here annually to nest. **Mayabander**, at the northern tip, 71 km (44 miles) from Rangat, is a beautiful spot. Some of its beaches, such as **Karmatang**, are famous for their spectacular sunrises, and are also nesting grounds for marine turtles.

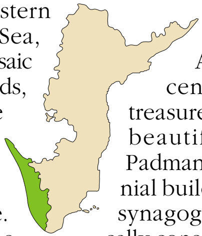
North Andaman ❾

North Andaman Island. 290 km (180 miles) N from Port Blair to Diglipur. ⛴ *from Port Blair.* **Travel permits** *required for the Andamans* (see p758).

North Andaman is the least populated of the three large islands. **Diglipur**, in the northeast, is one of the few places with accommodation. It is known for its beaches – in particular, Ram Nagar and Kalipur – and also has the islands' highest peak, **Saddle Peak** (737 m/2,418 ft), which was recently declared a national park. A scenic trail leads to the peak's summit.

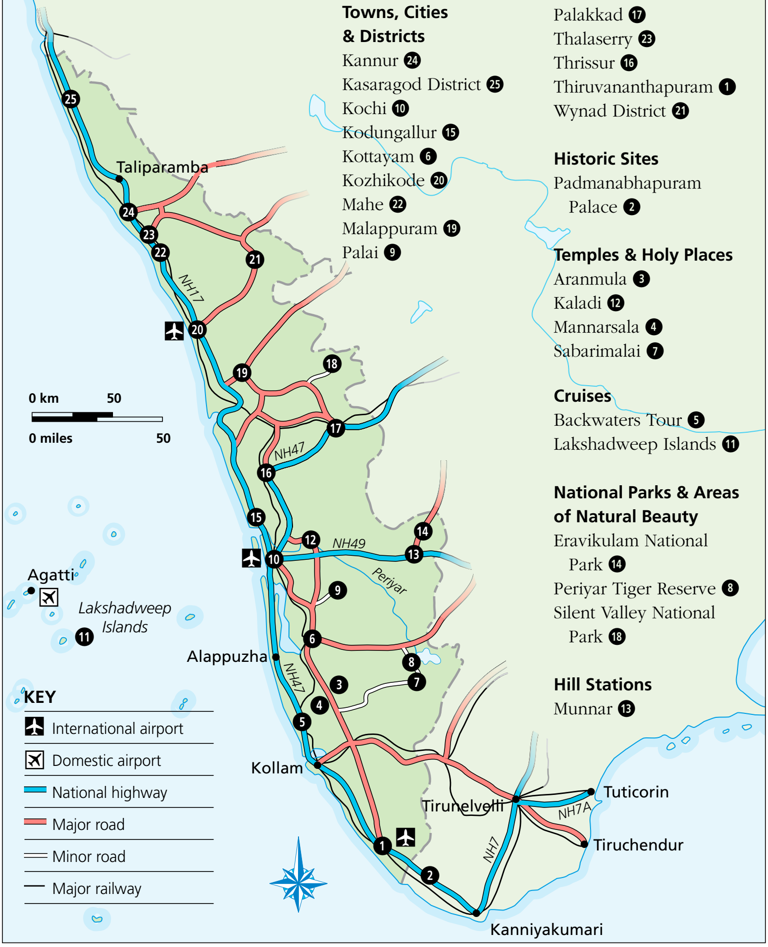
From **Aerial Bay**, 9 km (6 miles) northeast of Diglipur, one can visit Smith and Ross Islands *(see p619).*

KERALA



Nestling between the Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea, Kerala is an enchanting mosaic of coconut groves and paddy fields, wide beaches and labyrinthine backwaters, verdant hills and rainforests. Its diverse culture is enriched by the three great religions that have ancient roots here. Hinduism is the religion of the majority, practised here with a rare rigour that prohibits non-Hindus from entering most temples. Christianity, followed by a quarter of the population, was brought here by the Apostle St Thomas, while Islam was introduced by Arab traders in the 7th century. The architectural treasures of the state include the beautiful wooden palace at Padmanabhapuram, stately colonial buildings and a 16th-century synagogue in Kochi. This politically conscious state, where power alternates between Left and Centrist parties, boasts the highest literacy rate in India. Many of its people work in the Middle East, their remittances home adding greatly to Kerala's prosperity.

SIGHTS AT A GLANCE


Taliparamba
NH17
NH47
NH49
Periyar
0 km 50
0 miles 50
Agatti
Lakshadweep Islands
Alappuzha
Kollam
Tirunelveli
NH7A
NH7
Tuticorin
Tiruchendur
Kanniyakumari
KEY
International airport
Domestic airport
National highway
Major road
Minor road
Major railway

Towns, Cities & Districts

Kannur ㉔
Kasaragod District ㉕
Kochi ⑩
Kodungallur ⑮
Kottayam ⑥
Kozhikode ⑳
Mahe ㉒
Malappuram ⑲
Palai ⑨
Palakkad ⑰
Thalaserry ㉓
Thrissur ⑯
Thiruvananthapuram ①
Wynad District ㉑

Historic Sites

Padmanabhapuram Palace ②

Temples & Holy Places

Aranmula ③
Kaladi ⑫
Mannarsala ④
Sabarimalai ⑦

Cruises

Backwaters Tour ⑤
Lakshadweep Islands ⑪

National Parks & Areas of Natural Beauty

Eravikulam National Park ⑭
Periyar Tiger Reserve ⑧
Silent Valley National Park ⑱

Hill Stations

Munnar ⑬

◁ **Wooden canoes resting in the backwaters near Alleppey (Alappuzha)**

Thiruvananthapuram ❶

Vishnu in wood

Kerala's capital, known until recently as Trivandrum, was the seat of the former royal family of Travancore from 1750 to 1956. The magnificent Anantha Padmanabhaswamy Temple has given the city its name, Thiruvananthapuram – literally the "Holy City of Anantha", the sacred thousand-headed serpent on whom Vishnu reclines. Built across seven hills, the city's old quarter clusters around the temple, while along busy Mahatma Gandhi Road are colonial mansions, churches and modern high-rises.

The Napier Museum, built in the 19th century

Government Arts and Crafts (Napier) Museum

Museum Rd. ● *Mon, (Wed am) & public hols for all museums.* 📷 *covers all museums.* **Kanakakunnu Palace** ***Tel*** *(0471) 231 8294 for permission.*

Located in a well-planned compound is a complex of museums and the city's zoo. The Government Arts and Crafts Museum, earlier known as the Napier Museum after John Napier, a former governor of Madras, is in a red and black brick Indo-Saracenic structure, designed by Robert Fellows Chisholm *(see p569)* in the 19th century. It exhibits a rare collection of bronzes, stone sculptures, exquisite gold ornaments, ivory carvings and a temple chariot, all fashioned in the territories of the former kingdom of Travancore.

To the north of the Museum, is the **Shri Chitra Art Gallery**, housed in a beautiful building that incorporates the best elements of local architecture. The pride of its collection are the works of Raja Ravi Varma (1848–1906) and his uncle Raja Raja Varma, both pioneers of a unique academy style of painting in India. Raja Ravi Varma was considered the finest Indian artist of his time, and his mythological paintings have inspired the popular religious prints found in many Indian homes.

MARTIAL ARTS OF KERALA

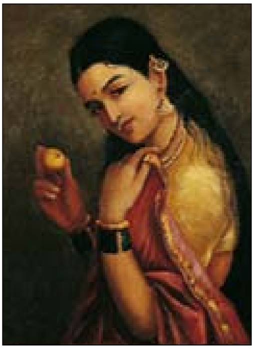
Kalarippayat practice, CVN Kalari Sangham

Constant warfare in the 11th century gave rise to *kalaripayattu*, Kerala's martial arts. From it emerged two streams – the *chavverpada*, suicide squads, and the *chekavan*, warriors who fought duels to the death, in order to settle the nobility's disputes. Students learn to use weapons such as swords, spears, daggers, the *urumi*, (a flexible metal sword) and wooden poles. In the final stage, the student is taught how to defeat an opponent by applying pressure to nerve points.

The **Natural History Museum**, to the east, has a fine replica of a typical Kerala Nair wooden house, *naluketu*, detailing the principles of its construction.

The **Kanakakunnu Palace**, where the Travancore royal family once entertained their guests, is adjacent to the complex, on top of a hill.

A short drive down the road from the complex leads to Kowdiar Junction, a roundabout of walls and ornate railings facing the Kowdiar Palace, the former maharaja's official residence.



A painting by Raja Ravi Varma in Sri Chitra Art Gallery

Mahatma Gandhi Road

The city's main road runs from the Victoria Jubilee Town Hall to the Anantha Padmanabhaswamy Temple. Among the many impressive buildings that line this road are the Secretariat, headquarters of the state government, the University College and the Public Library. The latter, founded in 1829, has a collection of more than 250,000 books and documents in Malayalam, Hindi, Tamil and Sanskrit. To the north, beyond the charming Connemara Market, are the Jami Masjid, St Joseph's Cathedral and the Neo-Gothic building of Christ Church.

Anantha Padmanabhaswamy Temple

Fort area. ● *to non-Hindus. Special rules for clothing apply* (see p762).

Located within the fort that encircles the old town, this is the only temple in the state with a towering seven-storeyed *gopura*, commonly

The imposing *gopura* of the Anantha Padmanabhaswamy Temple

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Thiruvananthapuram district. 708 km (440 miles) SW of Chennai. 👥 *3,234,700.* ✈ *6 km (4 miles) W of city centre, then bus or taxi.* 🚉 🚌 ℹ *Tourist Facilitation Centre, Museum Rd, (0471) 232 1132; TRC, opp Chaitram Hotel, (0471) 233 0031.* ⊜ *Mon–Sat.* 🎉 *Chandanakuda (Mar/Apr), Navaratri (Sep/Oct), Soorya Dance Festival (Oct), Nishangandhi Dance Festival (Nov).*

seen in Tamil Nadu's temple architecture. The restrained ornamentation, however, is typical of Kerala. A flagstaff encased in gold stands in the huge courtyard. The main corridor, which runs around four sides of the courtyard, has 324 columns and two rows of granite pillars, each embellished with a woman bearing a lamp (*deepalakshmi*). The hall also has mythological animals, sculpted with rotating stone balls in their jaws. Rich murals adorn the outer walls of the inner shrine, where the 6-m (20-ft) long reclining Vishnu resides, with his head towards the south and feet towards the north.

🏛 Kuthiramalika Palace Museum

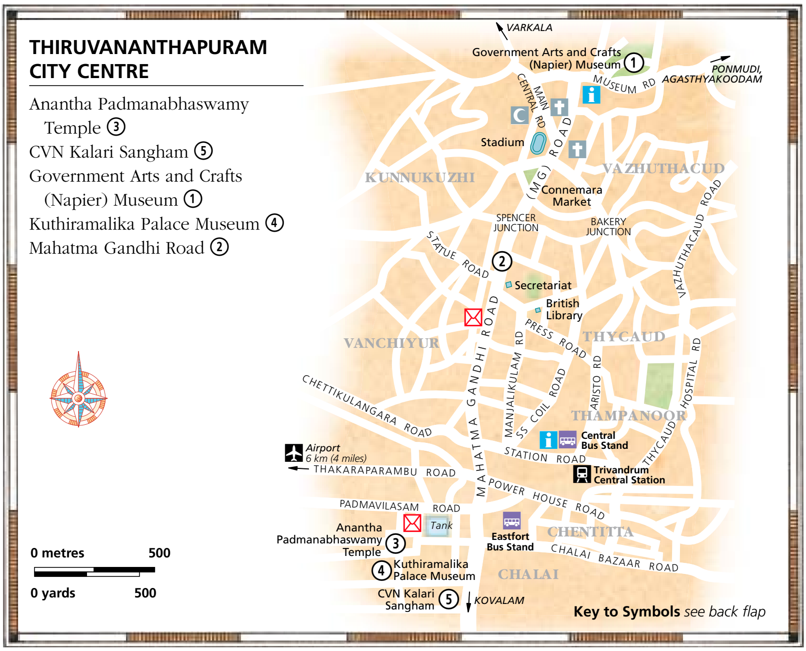
Fort area. ○ *Tue–Sun.* 🚫 📷 *extra charges.* ♿ 🎉 *Carnatic Music Festival (Jan/Feb).*

This interesting museum (also known as Puthen Malika) is housed in an 18th-century palace, built by Raja Swathi Thirunal Balarama Varma, a statesman, poet, musician and social reformer. A fine example of Kerala architecture, this wooden palace has polished floors and a sloping tiled roof. The wood carvings are particularly noteworthy, especially the 122 horses lining the eaves of the building. On display are various artifacts from the royal collection, including a solid crystal throne given by the Dutch, and another carved out of the tusks of 50 elephants.

🏛 CVN Kalari Sangham

East Fort area. ○ *Mon–Sat.* 🚫 ♿

This training centre for *kalaripayattu* was established in 1956 to revive Kerala's martial arts tradition. Each morning, students collect at the gymnasium *(kalari)* to perform a series of exercises that will help them develop the necessary combat skills. The centre also has a shrine to the deity of martial arts, Kalari Paradevata, and an Ayurvedic clinic where students are given oil massages.



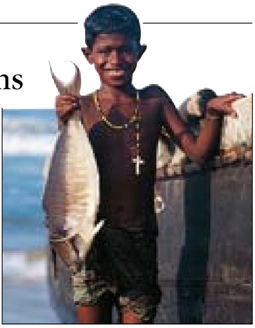
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM CITY CENTRE

Anantha Padmanabhaswamy Temple ③
CVN Kalari Sangham ⑤
Government Arts and Crafts (Napier) Museum ①
Kuthiramalika Palace Museum ④
Mahatma Gandhi Road ②

VARKALA
Government Arts and Crafts (Napier) Museum ①
PONMUDI, AGASTHYAKOODAM
MUSEUM RD
CENTRAL RD
MAIN ROAD
(MG)
Stadium
KUNNUKUZHI
VAZHUTHACUD
Connemara Market
SPENCER JUNCTION
BAKERY JUNCTION
VAZHUTHACAUD ROAD
STATUE ROAD
②
Secretariat
British Library
PRESS ROAD
THYCAUD
VANCHIYUR
MAHATMA GANDHI ROAD
MANJALIKULAM RD
SS COIL ROAD
ARISTO RD
HOSPITAL RD
CHETTIKULANGARA ROAD
THAMPANOOR
Central Bus Stand
THYCAUD ROAD
Airport 6 km (4 miles)
THAKARAPARAMBU ROAD
STATION ROAD
Trivandrum Central Station
POWER HOUSE ROAD
PADMAVILASAM ROAD
Tank
Eastfort Bus Stand
CHENTITTA
Anantha Padmanabhaswamy Temple ③
CHALAI BAZAAR ROAD
④ Kuthiramalika Palace Museum
CHALAI
CVN Kalari Sangham ⑤
KOVALAM
0 metres 500
0 yards 500
Key to Symbols see back flap

Exploring Thiruvananthapuram's Environs

Thiruvananthapuram is the gateway to the southern tip of India. South of the city, along the Lakshadweep Sea, are many beach resorts, the most famous of which is Kovalam. The Padmanabhapuram Palace *(see pp630–31)*, the former residence of the Travancore kings, is to the southeast, while to its north and east are tranquil hill stations located picturesquely in the densely forested Cardamom (Ponmudi) Hills. Thiruvananthapuram also houses many important institutions, including the meteorological station, which performs the task of plotting the arrival of the Southwest Monsoon. The city is also one of Kerala's main centres of Ayurveda.



A young boy flaunts his catch, Kovalam Beach

Lighthouse Beach, one of the many idyllic beaches in Kovalam

Kovalam

Thiruvananthapuram district. 16 km (10 miles) S of Thiruvananthapuram. 🚌 ℹ *Tourism Office, (0471) 248 0085.*

Until the 1960s, Kovalam was just a sleepy fishing village with narrow lanes and thatched dwellings with wide courtyards for drying fish. However, once its spectacular beach and shallow, crystal-clear waters were discovered, it became a favourite with hippies and backpackers, and over the years acquired the reputation of being a shabby, downmarket resort. Today, however, it also attracts the rich and famous, who come here in private planes. As a result, the beaches are dotted with both luxury and budget resorts, as well as cafés and several government-approved Ayurveda centres that offer anything from a simple massage to three-week treatments. Hawkers, too, have set up stalls selling handicrafts and inexpensive beachwear. Despite the onslaughts of mass tourism, Kovalam retains an inherent charm that makes it one of India's finest and most popular beach resorts.

Kovalam's sheltered natural bay is ringed by two rocky headlands. Its four beaches – Samudra Beach, Ashok Beach, Eve's Beach and Lighthouse Beach – all within short walking distance of each other, – provide visitors with their fill of sun, sea and sand. While the beaches to the south of the promontory are more crowded, the ones to the north offer ample secluded space for sunbathing, safe swimming in the placid blue waters, catamaran trips, and water sports.

Varkala

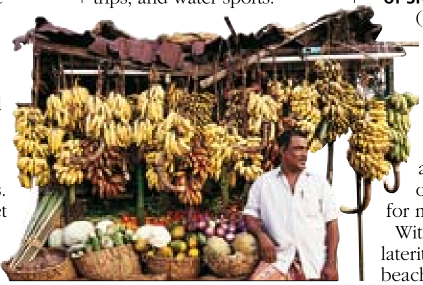
Thiruvananthapuram district. 40 km (25 miles) N of Thiruvananthapuram. 🚌 ℹ *Tourist Information Centre, near the helipad.*

This beautiful little beach town is better known among locals as a major pilgrimage centre. According to legend, the sage Narada flung a cloth made from the bark of a tree into the air, and it landed at the spot where the small town of Varkala now stands. Narada then directed his disciples to pray for salvation at the newly created beach, which came to be known as Papanasham Beach or the "Beach of Redemption". Since then, this beach has been associated with ancestor worship, as Hindus immerse the ashes of their dead here.

At the heart of the town is the sacred **Janardhana Swamy Temple**, believed to be more than 2,000 years old. This temple, dedicated to Krishna, attracts many pilgrims. One of the bells in the temple is said to have been given in gratitude by the captain of a 17th-century Dutch sailing ship, after his prayers were answered.

Varkala's other pilgrimage centre is the hilltop **Memorial of Sree Narayana Guru** (1855–1928) at Sivagiri, 3 km (2 miles) east of the temple. Every day, countless devotees flock to the memorial of this great saint and social reformer who advocated "one caste, one religion, one god for mankind".

With its backdrop of red laterite cliffs overlooking the beach, Varkala has now emerged as a popular resort



Bananas and other fruit on sale, Varkala

A view of the long sandy beach at Varkala

and spa. The town is famous for its natural springs with therapeutic qualities, and is also a centre for Ayurvedic treatment and yoga. To the south is the desolate Anjengo Fort, the main garrison of the Dutch East India Company in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Ponmudi

Thiruvananthapuram district. 61 km (38 miles) NE of Thiruvananthapuram.
🚌 ℹ *Government Guest House, (0472) 280 230.*

Ponmudi, literally "Golden Crown", rises to a height of 915 m (3,002 ft) from the base of a thick tropical forest. Surrounded by tea estates and forested hills, this hill station is still unspoilt, refreshingly cool and mist-shrouded for most of the year. Its narrow winding paths and verdant environs offer pleasant walks. Wild flowers grow in abundance on the banks of gurgling brooks, adding to the charm of this peaceful place.

Agasthyarkoodam

Thiruvananthapuram district. 60 km (37 miles) NE of Thiruvananthapuram.
Trekking permits *Contact the Office of the Wildlife Warden, Thiruvananthapuram, (0471) 232 9925.*

At an elevation of 1,890 m (6,201 ft), Agasthyarkoodam is the highest peak in southern Kerala. It forms part of the Western Ghats and the Agasthyavanam Forest, designated a sanctuary in 1992.

The mountain is revered by both Buddhists and Hindus, as it is believed to be the abode of the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara *(see p141)*, as well as of the sage Agastya, a disciple of Shiva. Women are not allowed here. The hills are rich in medicinal herbs, and harbour many species of birds and wildlife. Trekking to the top – a distance of 28 km (17 miles) – takes two days and is permitted only between December and April. The summit provides fine views of the lake created by the Neyyar Dam.

AYURVEDA THERAPY

Ayurvedic treatment in progress

A classical text on medicine, the *Ashtangahridaya*, is the foundation of Ayurveda in Kerala. Its author, Vagbhata, was the disciple of a Buddhist physician, and received little recognition in the rest of India. It is believed that a few Nampoothiri (Brahmin) families were the original Ayurvedic physicians, and their descendants still carry the honorific title of *ashtavaidyan*. Today, this holistic science of healing is practised throughout India. However, the Kerala method is famous for its five-pronged treatment, *panchakarma*, in which medicated oils, herbs, milk, massage and a special diet are used to cure all types of ailments.

FESTIVALS OF KERALA

Vishu *(Apr)*. The first day of the Malayali New Year is celebrated with zest throughout the state. It is believed that looking upon a group of auspicious objects at dawn ensures a year of peace and prosperity.

Thrissur Pooram *(Apr/May)*, Thrissur. The highlight of this festival is the ceremonial procession of two *devis* (goddesses) on caparisoned elephants to the Vadakunnathan Temple. The parasols held above the elephants are changed in an exciting synchronized ritual, accompanied by *chendamelam*, an orchestra of percussion instruments. A display of fireworks marks the climax.

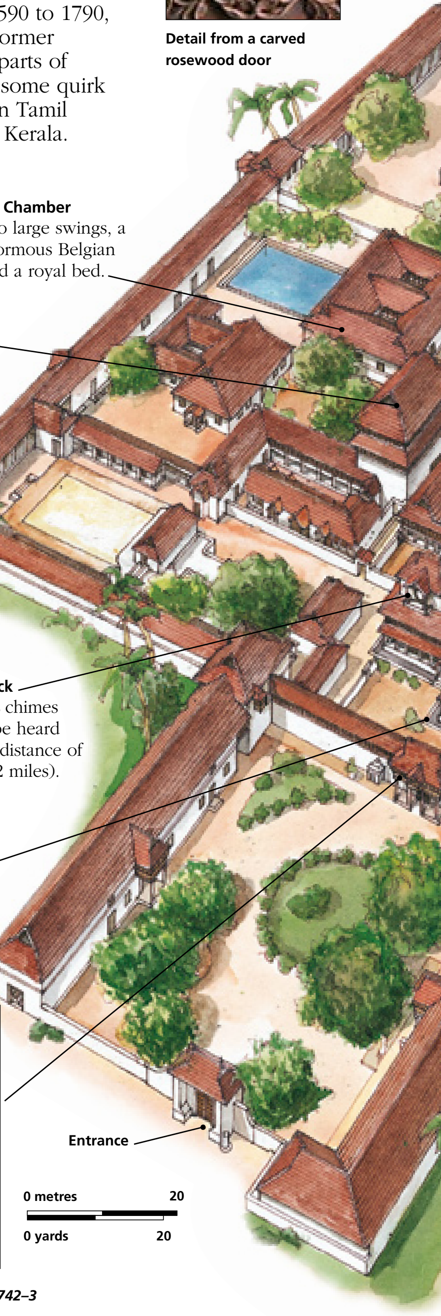
Onam *(Aug/Sep)*. The most popular of Kerala's festivals. It honours Mahabali, a selfless ruler whose subjects were so content that envious gods tricked him into losing his life and kingdom. His last wish was to visit his people once a year to ensure that they were happy. During Onam, an aura of plenty is created to gladden Mahabali's heart. Great feasts are prepared, new clothes worn, and courtyards are decorated with floral patterns *(athapookkalam)*. The Nehru Trophy Boat Race *(see p36)* is held at this time.

Caparisoned elephants and musicians, Thrissur Pooram

Padmanabhapuram Palace ❷

Set amid lush hills, verdant paddy fields and perennial rivers, Padmanabhapuram Palace is the finest example of Kerala's distinctive wooden architecture. Laid out in a sequence of four adjoining walled compounds, comprising public and private zones, the palace has richly carved wooden ceilings, sculpted pillars, slatted windows, and pagoda-like tiled roofs. From 1590 to 1790, Padmanabhapuram was the home of the the former princely state of Travancore, which straddled parts of present-day Tamil Nadu as well as Kerala. By some quirk of fate, this beautifully kept palace now falls in Tamil Nadu but is maintained by the government of Kerala.

Detail from a carved rosewood door



The Lady's Chamber houses two large swings, a pair of enormous Belgian mirrors and a royal bed.

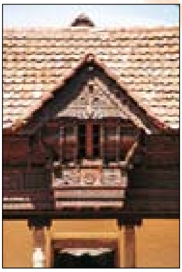
★ Prayer Hall

The prayer hall, on the third floor of the King's Palace, has exquisite murals on its walls. A medicinal bed here, carved from 64 different types of wood, was a gift from the Dutch.

The clock tower's chimes could be heard from a distance of 3 km (2 miles).

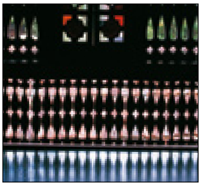
Entrance Hall

The entrance hall has a profusely carved wooden ceiling with 90 different inverted flowers, a polished granite bed and an ornate Chinese throne.



Main Gate

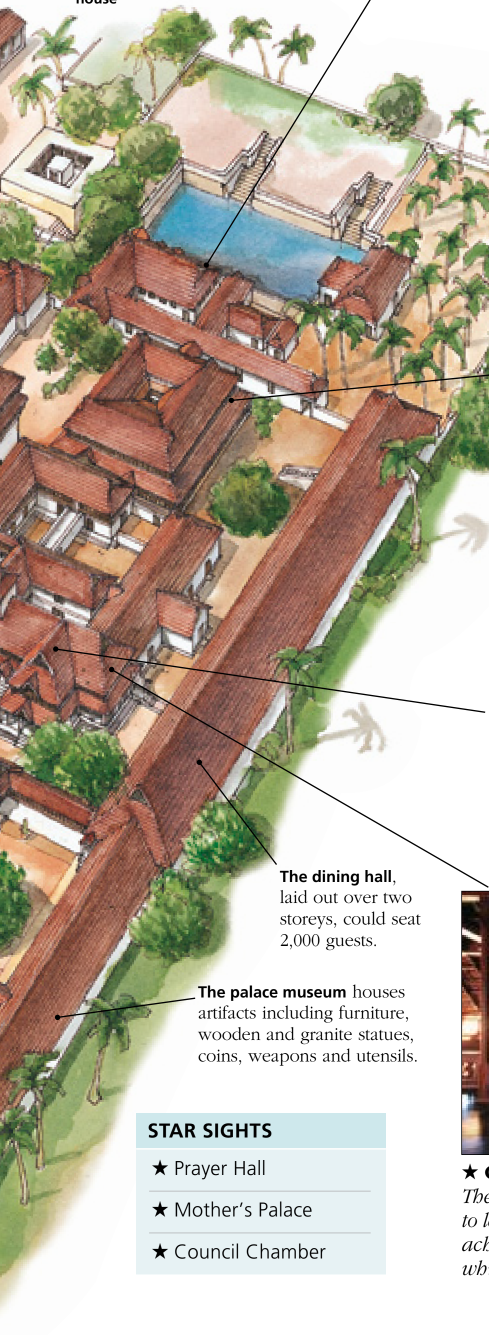
The main entrance to the palace complex is reached after crossing a large courtyard. This gate has a decorated gabled roof.



Carved bay window for watching processions

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Tamil Nadu state. Kanniyakumari district. 52 km (32 miles) SE of Thiruvananthapuram. 🚌 ***Tel*** *(04651) 250 255.* 🕐 *Tue–Sun.* 🚫 📷 *extra charges.* ♿



Guest house

The Bath House is a small airy room, where the male members of the royal family were given a massage before they descended, down covered steps, to a private tank to bathe.

★ Mother's Palace
Built in 1550, this is the oldest building in the complex. It contains intricately carved wooden pillars fashioned from the wood of the jackfruit tree. The floor was polished to a red gloss with hibiscus flowers.

Lamp
A horse lamp (the horse is a symbol of valour) in the entrance hall, hangs suspended from a special chain that keeps the lamp perfectly balanced.

The dining hall, laid out over two storeys, could seat 2,000 guests.

★ Council Chamber
The king's council chamber has wooden louvres to let in light and air. The gloss on the floor was achieved with a mixture of lime, sand, egg white, coconut water, charcoal and jaggery.

The palace museum houses artifacts including furniture, wooden and granite statues, coins, weapons and utensils.

STAR SIGHTS

- ★ Prayer Hall
- ★ Mother's Palace
- ★ Council Chamber

An elephant being led down the steps of Aranmula's Parthasarthy Temple

Aranmula ❸

Pathanamthitta district. 125 km (78 miles) NW of Thiruvananthapuram. *from Alappuzha.* *Onam Boat Regatta (Aug/Sep).*

The picturesque village of Aranmula, situated on the banks of the Pampa river, is famous as the venue for Kerala's magnificent snake boat races. The boat race festival has its origins in the legend of a devotee who once gave food to a Brahmin, believed to be Vishnu in disguise. However, the Brahmin, before disappearing, advised him to send his offering to Aranmula instead. Since then, during the festival, a ceremonial boat, carved out of a single block of wood, carries a consignment of food from a nearby village to the temple at Aranmula. On the last day of Onam *(see p629)*, this ceremonial boat leads a procession of about 30 snake boats to the temple. On this day, there is no racing and all the boats arrive together, as Krishna is said to be present on each boat at the same time.

The **Parthasarathy Temple**, one of the state's five most important temples, is dedicated to Krishna, and has an image of the god as Parthasarathy, the Divine Charioteer in the great epic, the *Mahabharata*. The image was brought here on a raft made of six bamboos, and this is what the town's name signifies – in Malayalam *aaru* means six and *mula*, bamboo.

Aranmula is also known for its unique metal mirrors made from an alloy of silver, bronze copper and lead. These mirrors were traditionally used as part of the arrangement of auspicious objects during Vishu, the Malayali New Year, in April *(see p629)*.

Environs

The 14th-century **Thiruvamundur Temple**, near Chengannur, 7 km (4 miles) west of Aranmula is dedicated to Krishna and attributed to Nakul, one of the five Pandava brothers *(see p26)*. Near Chenganacherry, 27 km (17 miles) northwest of Aranmula, is the **Tirukkodittanam Temple**. This 11th-century temple is dedicated to Sahadev, Nakul's twin brother, and has lovely murals adorning its walls. It is a temple vibrant in tradtional art and music.

Metal mirror, Aranmula

Mannarsala ❹

Alappuzha district. 132 km (82 miles) NW of Thiruvananthapuram, *(0479) 241 3214.* *Thulam (Oct/Nov).*

The custom of worshipping snakes in Kerala reaches a climax at Mannarsala, the best known of the four main Naga temples in the state. According to legend, a woman from a family of great Naga devotees gave birth to two sons, one of whom was a serpent-child, who asked his family to worship him and vanished. The temples at Mannarsala, dedicated to the King of Snakes, Nagaraja, and his consort, Sarpayakshini, are situated in a thick grove of tall trees and dense bushes, surrounded by thousands of hooded stone serpents of various styles and sizes.

In Kerala, the ancestral home *(tharavad)* of every upper-class Namboothiri and Nair family is supposed to have a *sarpa-kavu* or snake-grove, housing a *nagakal* or snake stone. If a *tharavad* cannot afford to maintain its own shrine, the snake stones are offered to this temple.

The holy rites at Mannarasala are conducted by a priestess *(amma)*, a vestal virgin, who lives on the premises and is supported in her religious duties by her family.

Childless couples place a bell metal vessel *(uruli)* face down in front of the deities, to seek their blessings.

SACRED SERPENT SHRINES

In Kerala, the sacred serpent plays a significant role in belief and ritual. Malayali folklore speaks of a wooded, rural land inhabited mainly by Nagas (snakes) – the Lords of the Underworld – who were overthrown by the Brahmin settlers brought here by Parasurama *(see p679)*, the sixth incarnation of Vishnu. This mythological incident is the origin of snake worship in Kerala since, after their defeat, Parasurama ordered that snakes be accorded divine status. Most temples thus have a niche for a snake god, amid dense sacred groves of ancient trees. The old ancestral homes *(tharavads)* also have private temples or groves for a snake deity.

Sacred grove with snake *(naga)* images, Mannarsala Temple

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp714–17 and pp742–3

Boats of Kerala

Kerala's ancient boat-building industry is a specialized part of its rich wood-working tradition, that also includes architecture *(see p638)*. Boats built at Beypore *(see p653)* were highly prized and used by Arab merchants. The construction of a boat is always begun on an auspicious day in the Malayalam calendar, and is marked by an invocation to the gods. The most sought-after wood is *anjili (Artocarpus hirsuta)*, though teak is also used. Racing boats of various sizes and shapes participate in the annual Onam regatta at Aranmula. Of these, the most magnificent is the long, narrow *chundanvallam*, or snake boat.

Dugouts with carved sterns

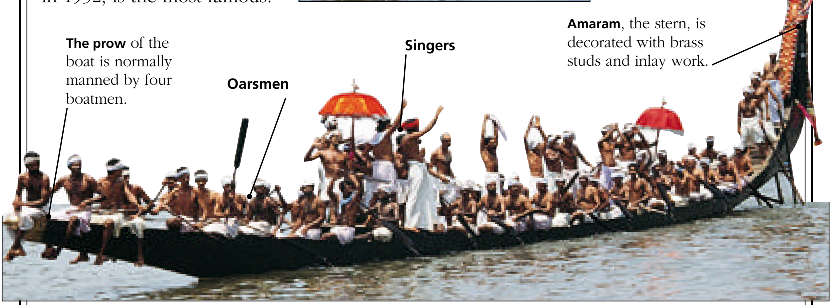
BOAT BUILDING

A master craftsman, assisted by a team traditionally drawn from different religions, builds the boat. No nails or metal pieces are used; only wooden pegs and joints hold the parts together.

SNAKE BOAT RACES

Snake boats *(chundanvallam)*, once used to carry warriors, now participate in what is believed to be the world's largest team sport. The Nehru Trophy Boat Race *(see p36)*, introduced in 1952, is the most famous.

Rowing *is perfectly synchronized to the pulsating rhythm of* vanchipattu *(boatmen's songs). Their themes are devotional, mythological, or related to rural life.*

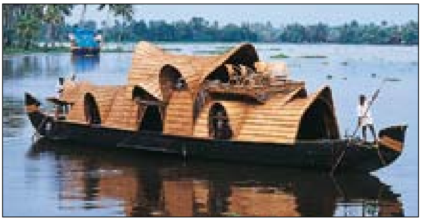


The prow of the boat is normally manned by four boatmen.

Oarsmen

Singers

Amaram, the stern, is decorated with brass studs and inlay work.

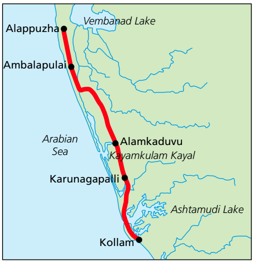


Kettuvallams *are now often converted into houseboats.* Kettu *means a bundle, while* vallam *is a big boat. Originally, these were used as ferries or to carry rice.*

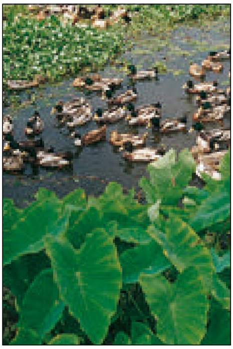
Canoes, *usually made from a single log of wood, can carry no more than one or two people. They are commonly used to transport light cargo, such as coir fibre.*

Backwaters Tour ❺

A cruise along the backwaters is one of the most enchanting experiences that Kerala offers. Exploring this labyrinthine network of waterways, which weave through villages set amidst lush vegetation, offers glimpses of Kerala's unique rural lifestyle, where land and water are inseparable. The most popular backwaters tour is from Kollam (Quilon), situated between Ashtamudi Lake and the Arabian Sea, to Alappuzha (Alleppey) on the edge of Vembanad Lake. The choice of transport ranges from local ferries and speedboats to *kettuvallams (see p633)*.



LOCATOR MAP



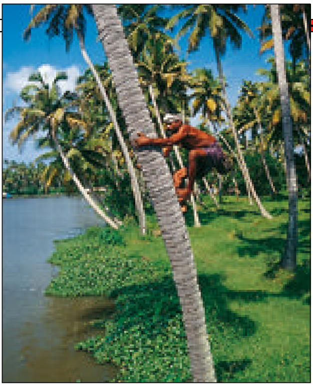
Water hyacinths *are the cause of a serious ecological problem since untamed growth has clogged the waterways of Kuttanad, the rice bowl of Kerala.*

Children going to school *by boat are a common sight. Various types of boats are used as transport along the backwaters, connecting the small villages with the mainland.*

Coconut palms fringe the waterways. In addition to coconuts, rice is cultivated extensively in Kuttanad, the area between Kottayam and Alappuzha.

Houses along a canal *have jetties with moored boats. The ground and water levels are often equal, which makes flooding a problem during the monsoon.*

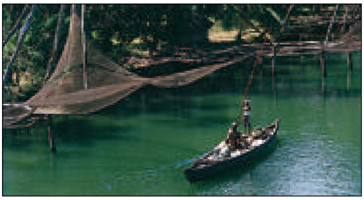
Coconut Lagoon (see p715) *is a wonderful resort on Vembanad Lake, near the bird sanctuary in Kumarakom.*



Toddy tappers *are expert at scaling coconut palms. The local brew, made from fermented coconut palm sap, is sold in shacks along the waterways. The first brew is light and delicious – however, potency levels rise with subsequent fermentation.*

TIPS FOR PASSENGERS

Route 1: Kollam to Alappuzha
Dep: 10:30am. Maximum duration: 8 hrs. ℹ District Tourism Promotion Council (DTPC), Kollam, (0474) 274 5625.
Route 2: Alappuzha to Kollam
Dep: 10:30am. Maximum duration: 8 hrs. ℹ DTPC, Alappuzha, (0477) 225 3308.
For more details see p781.



Chinese fishing nets *along the backwaters are used to trap fish. A popular fish in Kerala,* karimeen *(pearl spot), is found in these waters.*

Children with banana trunks playing in the water

BACKWATERS

According to legend, Parasurama, the sixth incarnation of Vishnu, created Kerala by throwing his battle axe into the sea. The abundance of canals, lagoons and lakes in the state seem to reinforce this legend of a land born from the sea.

In this coir-producing village, *women beat the husk and spin the fibre to make ropes or floor coverings. The fibre is often dyed to create brightly coloured mats with geometric designs.*

Coconut husks *soak in the shallow waters near the banks. This softens the husks before they are beaten to produce the fine fibre that is turned into coir. The flesh is converted into oil, or used in cooking.*

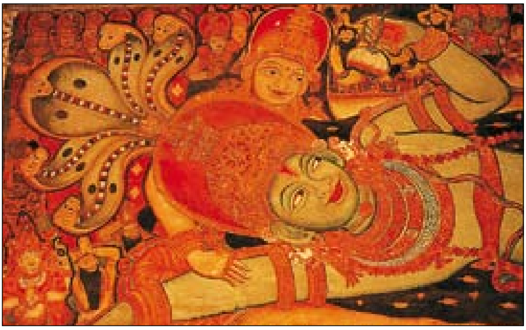
Tea gardens surrounding the Mattupetty Reservoir, Munnar ***(see p648)*** ▷

Kottayam ❻

Kottayam district. 160 km (99 miles) N of Thiruvananthapuram. 👥 *60,750.* 🚉 🚌 ℹ *District Tourist Promotion Council, (0481) 256 0479.* 🎭 *Drama Festival (Jan).*

Enclosed by the blue waters of Vembanad Lake and the paddy fields of Kuttanad to its west, and by the lush hills of the Western Ghats to its east, Kottayam is one of Kerala's most beautiful districts. Its climate and landscape have combined to make the region prosperous. Kottayam town is surrounded by extensive plantations of rubber, and other valuable cash crops such as tea, coffee, cardamom and pepper. The first town in India to attain 100 per cent literacy, it is also the birthplace of Kerala's publishing industry and home to many Malayalam newspapers and magazines. A writers' co-operative society, the Sahitya Pravarthaka Sahakarana Sangham, which was set up here more than 50 years ago, has played a cardinal role in fostering the growth of Malayalam literature.

Kottayam also has an old Christian tradition that has been preserved by its large Syrian Christian population. It was one of the first towns to be patronized by St Thomas *(see p573)* in the 1st century AD. Of the many fine churches and seminaries that dot the landscape, the best known are the two Syrian Orthodox churches, **Valia Palli** and **Cheria Palli**, both dating to the mid-16th century. The churches stand on a hillock, about 2 km (1.2 miles) north of the city centre, and have colourful frescoes adorning their walls. The Nestorian cross at Valia Palli is said to have come from Kerala's first church, founded by St Thomas at Kodungallur *(see p649)*. Cheria Palli has painted panels behind its main altar, depicting scenes from the life of the Virgin Mary.


Mural from the stately Shiva temple at Ettumanur

Nestorian cross at Valia Palli Church, Kottayam

Environs

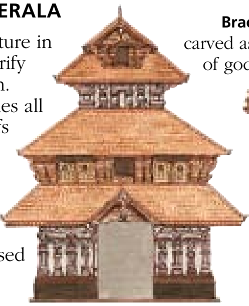
Mannanam, 8 km (5 miles) north of Kottayam, is a pilgrimage centre for Syrian Christians, who gather in their thousands each January to attend a religious convention, one of the largest in Asia.

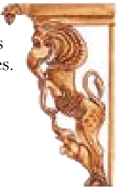
Kumarakom, a bird sanctuary on the banks of Vembanad Lake, is 12 km (7 miles) west of Kottayam. A great variety of birds can be observed from vantage points.

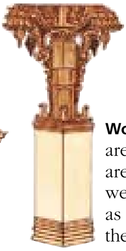
A large temple dedicated to Shiva at **Ettumanur**, 12 km (7 miles) north of Kottayam, has beautiful murals, similar to those found at Mattancherry Palace in Kochi *(see p642)*. The 11th-century Mahadeva Temple at **Vaikom**, 40 km (25 miles) northwest of Kottayam, is famous for its elephant pageants and traditional dance performances, which take place between November and December each year. It is also the site where Mahatma Gandhi led an important *satyagraha* (civil disobedience movement) to make temples accessible to untouchables.

WOODEN ARCHITECTURE IN KERALA

The importance of wooden architecture in Kerala is evident in legends that glorify the master carpenter, Perunthachhan. Palaces, temples, mosques and homes all have characteristic sloping tiled roofs to drain away the heavy rains during the monsoon. Roofs are generally hipped, often with decorated gables, topped by brass pot finials. To achieve height, they rise in two or more superimposed tiers to create steeply pyramidal profiles. Joints and wooden pegs, instead of nails, are used.


Temple with pyramidal roof


Brackets are often carved as *yalis* or figures of gods and goddesses.


Wooden pillars are ornate. These are decorative as well as functional, as they support the roof.

The Baroque façade of St Thomas Church, at Palai

Sabarimalai ❼

Pattanamthitta district. 191 km (119 miles) N of Thiruvananthapuram. 🚌 *to Pamba, then by foot.* 🎉 *Mandalam (Dec/Jan), Makaravilakku (mid-Jan).*

One of the most famous pilgrimage centres in India, Sabarimalai lies in the Western Ghats at an altitude of 914 m (2,999 ft). The final 14-km (9-mile) approach from Pamba, through dense forest, is made on foot.

The focus of devotion here is the temple dedicated to the popular deity, Ayyappa. The temple stays open from November to mid-January, in April and during the first five days of each month of the Malayalam calendar. People of all religions can worship here, but women between the ages of 10 and 50 are restricted from entering. The final 18 sacred steps (each representing a sin that a devotee renounces on setting foot on it) are sheathed in *panchaloha*, an alloy of five metals, and lead to the sanctum. Only those who have observed 41 days of penance (celibacy, wearing black and and not shaving) are entitled to undertake the pilgrimage.

Periyar Tiger Reserve ❽

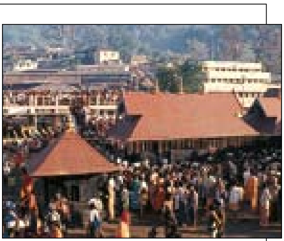
See pp640–41.

Palai ❾

Kottayam district. 175 km (109 miles) N of Thiruvananthapuram. 🚌 🎉 *Epiphany (6 Jan).* **St Thomas Church** ✝ *(Malayalam) 6am daily.*

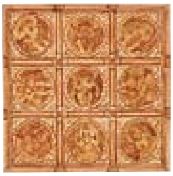
The prosperous town of Palai is surrounded by thick rubber plantations. The small but beautiful, 16th-century **St Thomas Church**, is its principal attraction. Constructed in the traditional style of early Christian churches in Kerala, It has a quaint wooden pulpit with a fish-like base, an elaborately carved main altar and two simpler side altars. A stone slab carries inscriptions in Syriac. Attractive glass candelabra are suspended from wall brackets, while a chandelier hangs from the ceiling. There is a wooden balcony at the rear. Services are still held in the church. Adjoining this building is a modern church, also dedicated to St Thomas.

THE AYYAPPA CULT

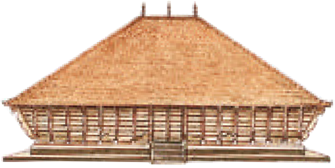


Ayyappa devotees, Sabarimalai

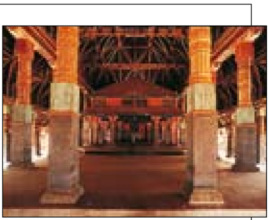
A Dravidian deity worshipped throughout Kerala, Ayyappa (or Sastha), was born out of the union between Shiva and Vishnu (who had transformed himself into a woman, Mohini). The baby, found on the banks of the Pamba river, was adopted by the childless king of Pandalam. Ayyappa later revealed his divine status when he destroyed a demon. Before returning to his heavenly abode, however, the god shot an arrow into the air which landed near the ashram of the sage Sabari, where a temple was built. Ayyappa's warrior friend, Vavar, is a Muslim saint whose *dargah* nearby is visited by both Muslims and Hindus.



Ceilings are divided into panels carved with lotus designs or Hindu deities, such as Brahma, surrounded by *dikpalas* (guardian figures).



Koottambulams, traditional theatres, are usually situated in the precincts of large temples and palaces. They serve as the venue for staging Koodiyattam (dance-drama) performances.



Interiors of *koottambulams* have tall wooden pillars and *jalis* on three sides for ventilation. The roof is specially designed to provide excellent acoustic quality.

Periyar Tiger Reserve ❽

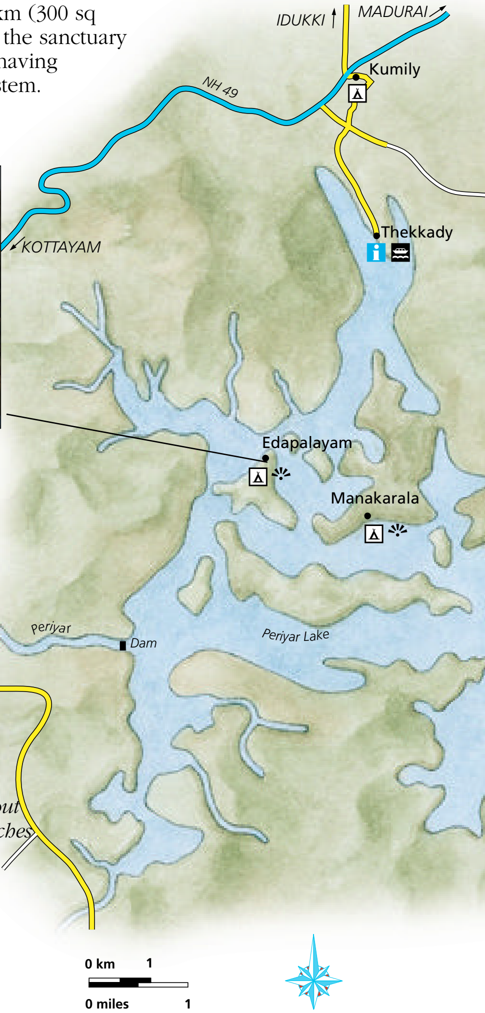
Common kingfisher

The construction of the Mullaperiyar Dam across the Periyar river at Thekkady, in 1895, submerged large tracts of land and created a huge lake, covering an area of 26 sq km (10 sq miles). Years later, in 1935, the then Maharaja of Travancore declared 600 sq km (232 sq miles) of forest surrounding the lake a wildlife sanctuary. The Periyar Lake now forms the nucleus of the ecosystem of the sanctuary which, over the years, has been expanded to 777 sq km (300 sq miles). Declared a Tiger Reserve in 1978, the sanctuary is a rare example of human interference having enhanced rather than damaged an ecosystem.

Visitors viewing wildlife from a boat on Periyar Lake

Lake Palace

The former hunting lodge of the Maharaja of Travancore is now a delightful hotel inside the sanctuary (see p716).



Birdlife

The petrified tree trunks that jut out from the lake make convenient perches for birds looking out for fish.

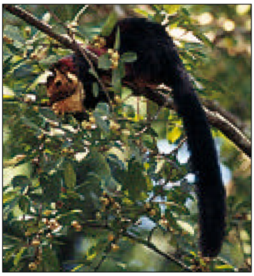
Wildlife

The deciduous forests, grasslands and tropical evergreen interiors of Periyar are the habitat of the endangered lion-tailed macaque (left), *as well as Indian bison* (gaur), *sloth bears and the slender loris.*

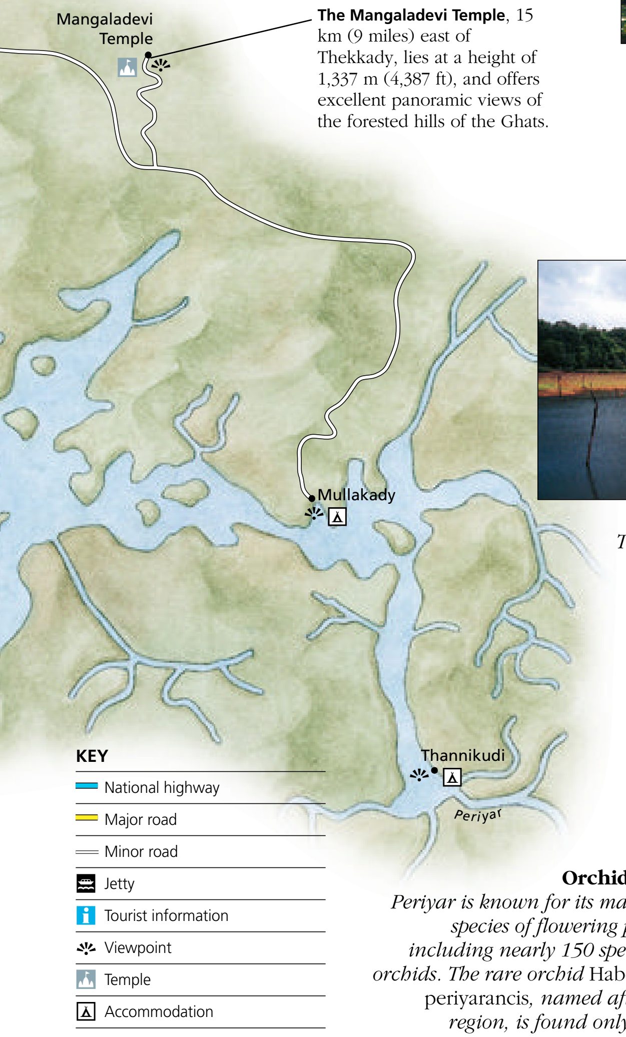
Herds of Elephants
The lake, a year-round source of water, and the abundant grassland make the sanctuary an ideal habitat for elephants, which now number approximately 800.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Idukki district. 190 km (118 miles) N of Kochi. 🚌 ℹ *Forest Divisional Office, Kumily (04869) 22 2028, Tourist Information Centre, Kumily (04869) 22 2620.*

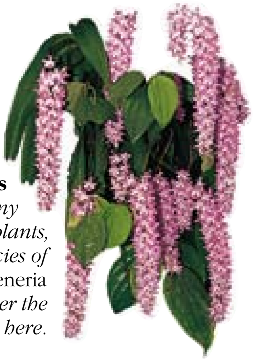


Indian Giant Squirrel
This agile squirrel can make amazing leaps that cover about 6 m (20 ft). It is found in Periyar's deciduous and evergreen forests.


Mangaladevi Temple
Mullakady
Thannikudi
Periyar
KEY
National highway
Major road
Minor road
Jetty
Tourist information
Viewpoint
Temple
Accommodation

The Mangaladevi Temple, 15 km (9 miles) east of Thekkady, lies at a height of 1,337 m (4,387 ft), and offers excellent panoramic views of the forested hills of the Ghats.

Periyar Lake
Two-hour boat cruises on the mist-shrouded lake offer excellent opportunities for spotting wildlife, especially herds of elephants.

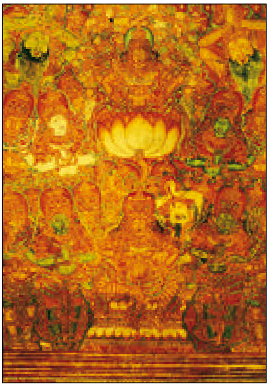


Orchids
Periyar is known for its many species of flowering plants, including nearly 150 species of orchids. The rare orchid Habeneria periyarancis, *named after the region, is found only here.*

Kochi ⑩

Antique mask

Kochi, better known as Cochin, is Kerala's most cosmopolitan city. It is also its main trading centre for spices and seafood. Built around a saltwater lagoon of the Arabian Sea, Kochi is in fact a collection of narrow islands and peninsulas. While mainland Ernakulam boasts of concrete shopping malls and glitzy apartment buildings, Mattancherry and Fort Kochi have an old world charm, with their blend of Dutch, Portuguese and English bungalows and quaint narrow streets *(see pp644–5)*. The scenic location of Kochi's natural harbour, surrounded by palm groves, green fields, inland lakes and backwaters, has enchanted visitors from across the globe for centuries.



Brahma emerging from Vishnu's navel, mural, Mattancherry Palace

Mattancherry Palace

Jew Town. ***Tel*** *(0484) 222 6085.*
○ *Sat–Thu.*

The Mattancherry Palace, constructed by the Portuguese in the mid-1550s, was given to the ruler of Cochin as a token of goodwill in exchange for trading rights. It was later renovated by the Dutch, and so gained the misnomer, Dutch Palace. The two-storeyed structure, built around a courtyard with a small shrine to the goddess Bhagavati, is today a museum with a rare collection of murals and royal artifacts.

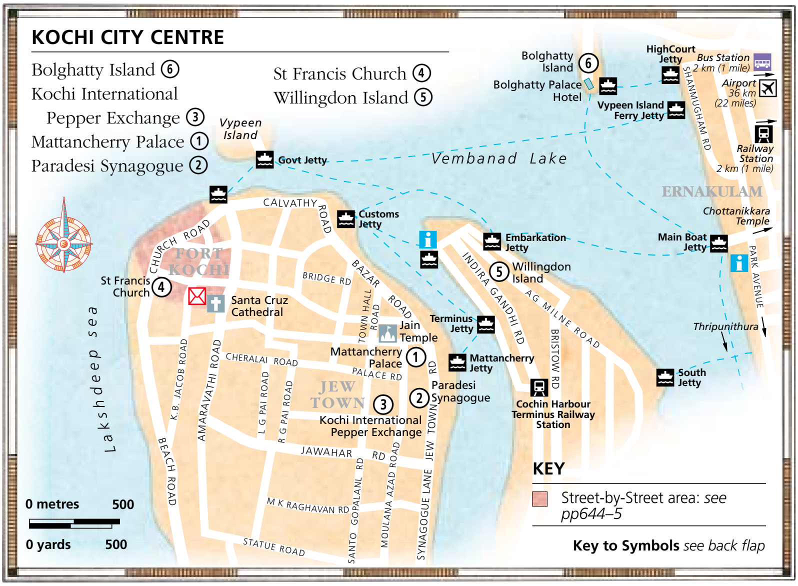
In the central Durbar Hall, where coronation ceremonies were once held, is the portrait gallery of the Kochi rulers; it also displays palanquins and textiles. The adjacent bedrooms and chambers are renowned for their fine 17th-century murals, representative of Kerala's temple art. Painted in rich, warm shades of red, yellow, black and white, they depict religious and mythological themes as well as episodes from the *Ramayana*.

★ Paradesi Synagogue

Jew Town. ○ *Sun-Fri.*

Nestling in a cul-de-sac at the end of a narrow lane, in the heart of Jew Town, is India's oldest synagogue. The first Jewish settlers are said to have reached Kodungallur *(see p649)* in the 1st century AD. Their settlement, then known as Shingly, prospered over the centuries.

However, persecution by the Portuguese in the early 16th century forced them to migrate to Cochin, where they settled on land given by the raja, and built a synagogue in 1568. Cochin's Jewish community was divided into two distinct groups – the so-called Black or Malabari Jews who claimed to be descendants of the original settlers, and the White or Paradesim Jews who came here from the Middle East, and after whom


KOCHI CITY CENTRE
Bolghatty Island ⑥
Kochi International Pepper Exchange ③
Mattancherry Palace ①
Paradesi Synagogue ②
St Francis Church ④
Willingdon Island ⑤
Vypeen Island
Govt Jetty
Vembanad Lake
Bolghatty Island ⑥
Bolghatty Palace Hotel
HighCourt Jetty
Bus Station 2 km (1 mile)
Airport 36 km (22 miles)
Vypeen Island Ferry Jetty
SHANMUGHAM RD
Railway Station 2 km (1 mile)
ERNAKULAM
Chottanikkara Temple
Main Boat Jetty
PARK AVENUE
Thripunithura
South Jetty
CALVATHY ROAD
Customs Jetty
CHURCH ROAD
FORT KOCHI
St Francis Church ④
Santa Cruz Cathedral
BRIDGE RD
BAZAR ROAD
TOWN HALL ROAD
Jain Temple
Terminus Jetty
Embarkation Jetty
Willingdon Island ⑤
INDIRA GANDHI RD
AG MILNE ROAD
BRISTOW RD
Mattancherry Palace ①
Mattancherry Jetty
PALACE RD
CHERALAI ROAD
JEW TOWN
Paradesi Synagogue ②
Kochi International Pepper Exchange ③
Cochin Harbour Terminus Railway Station
Lakshdeep sea
K.B. JACOB ROAD
AMARAVATHI ROAD
L G PAI ROAD
R G PAI ROAD
JAWAHAR RD
BEACH ROAD
SANTO GOPALANL RD
MOULANA AZAD ROAD
JEW TOWN RD
SYNAGOGUE LANE
M K RAGHAVAN RD
STATUE ROAD
0 metres 500
0 yards 500
KEY
Street-by-Street area: see pp644–5
Key to Symbols see back flap

Main hall with brass pulpit and blue-tiled floor, Paradesi Synagogue

the synagogue is named. A third, smaller group was the Brown or Meshuhurarum Jews, descended from converted slaves, many of whom were in the spice trade. In 1940, there were 2,500 Jews in Kerala, but today only a dozen families remain, the rest having migrated to Israel.

The present synagogue, with its tiled roof and clock tower, was rebuilt in 1664 with Dutch help, after the Portuguese destroyed it in 1662. The synagogue's treasures include beautiful silver and gold Torah scrolls, a multitude of hanging oil lamps and crystal chandeliers, and a superbly crafted brass pulpit. The floor is covered with exquisite hand-painted blue willow-pattern tiles, which were brought from Canton in the mid-18th century by a powerful merchant, Ezekiel Rahabi.

The narrow lanes around the synagogue are crammed with Dutch-style residences. Today, most of these house antique shops.

Kochi International Pepper Exchange

Jew Town. ***Tel*** *(0484) 222 4263. Passes required to enter hall.* ○ *Mon–Sat.*

This unique establishment reverberates with voices, seemingly raised in anger, as one ascends the stairs. However, nothing prepares the visitor for what lies within – the small hall is lined with tiny cubicles, each with a man talking animatedly on a telephone. Theatrical gestures accompanied by a loud cacophony of sounds mark the drama of each day's pepper auction.

St Francis Church

Fort Kochi. ○ *Mon–Sat.*
✝ *(English) 8am, daily.*

Established in the early 1500s by the Portuguese (who called it Santo Antonio) this is one of India's earliest European churches, with a simple façade that became the model for later churches. Taken over by the Dutch and then the British, it is today affiliated to the Church of South India.

Within are numerous gravestones with inscriptions, the earliest a Portuguese epitaph, dated 1562. Vasco da Gama *(see p653)* was buried here in 1524 until his body was taken to Portugal 14 years later.

Willingdon Island

This man-made island, named after the viceroy, Lord Willingdon, was created in the 1920s out of silt dredged to deepen Kochi port. Situated between Fort Kochi, Mattancherry and Ernakulam, it has some good hotels, as well as the main harbour, the Port Trust building, the customs house and the railway station. It is also an important naval base.

Antique shops lining the narrow lanes in Jew Town

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Ernakulam district. 222 km (138 miles) N of Thiruvananthapuram.
596,500. ✈ *36 km (22 miles) E of city centre, then bux or taxi.*
ℹ *Tourist Information Centre, (0484) 236 0502; TRC, near Ernakulam jetty (0484) 235 3234.*
Onam (Aug/Sep), Utsavam (Nov/Dec).

The gracious façade of Bolghatty Palace, now a hotel

Bolghatty Island

Bolghatty Palace Hotel ***Tel*** *(0484) 275 0500.* 🍴 *open to non-residents.*

A narrow strip of land, this beautiful island with breathtaking views of the bay, is the location of Bolghatty Palace. Set in 6 ha (15 acres) of lush green lawns, this palatial structure was originally built by the Dutch in 1744 and later became the home of the British Resident. It has now been converted into a hotel run by the Kerala Tourism Development Corporation *(see p714)*.

Environs

Kochi's bustling business centre, **Ernakulam**, is 10 km (6 miles) east of Fort Kochi. The Hill Palace at **Thripunithura**, 10 km (6 miles) southeast of Ernakulam, was built in 1895 and was the official residence of the former rulers of Cochin. The palace, set in spacious grounds, is now a museum with a fairly good collection of paintings, manuscripts and royal memorabilia. The exquisite floor tiles differ from room to room, and the sweeping wooden staircases have a grandeur all of their own. The 10th-century **Chottanikkara Temple**, dedicated to the mother goddess Bhagavati, one of Kerala's most popular deities, is 16 km (10 miles) northeast of Ernakulam.

Thripunithura Museum

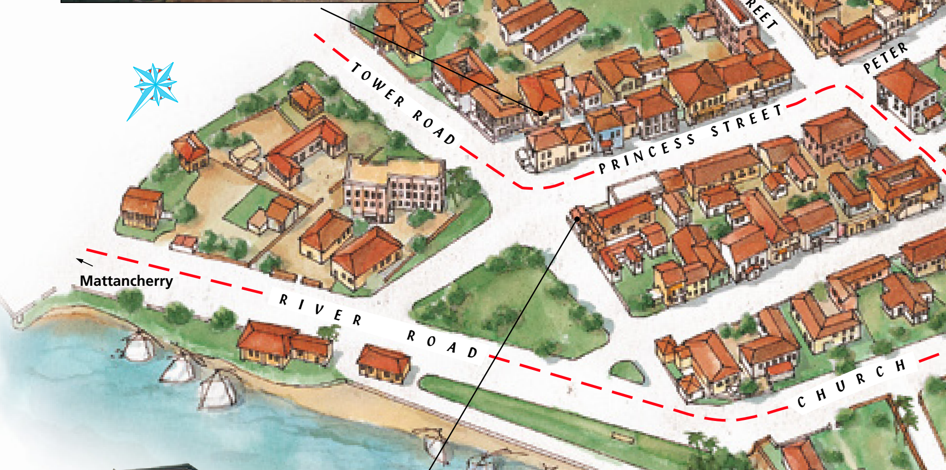
Tel *(0484) 278 1113.* ○ *Tue–Sun.*

Street-by-Street: Fort Kochi

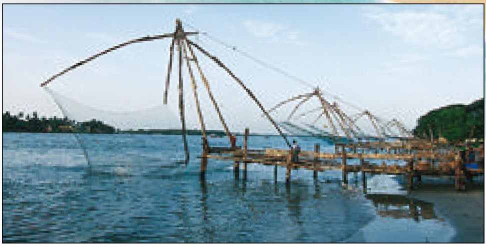
Kochi's natural harbour, created by a massive flood in 1341, attracted imperialists and merchants from all over the world. In the 16th century, the Portuguese built a fort here, which was later occupied by the Dutch and then the British. Today, this quarter, with its mixture of architectural styles, encapsulates Fort Kochi's tumultuous history. The most important building here is St Francis Church, erected by the Portuguese in 1502 and considered to be among the oldest churches built by Europeans in India. This area has now been declared a Heritage Zone to preserve its many historic buildings.

★ Santa Cruz Cathedral
Built in 1887, this cathedral has impressive murals on its ceiling.

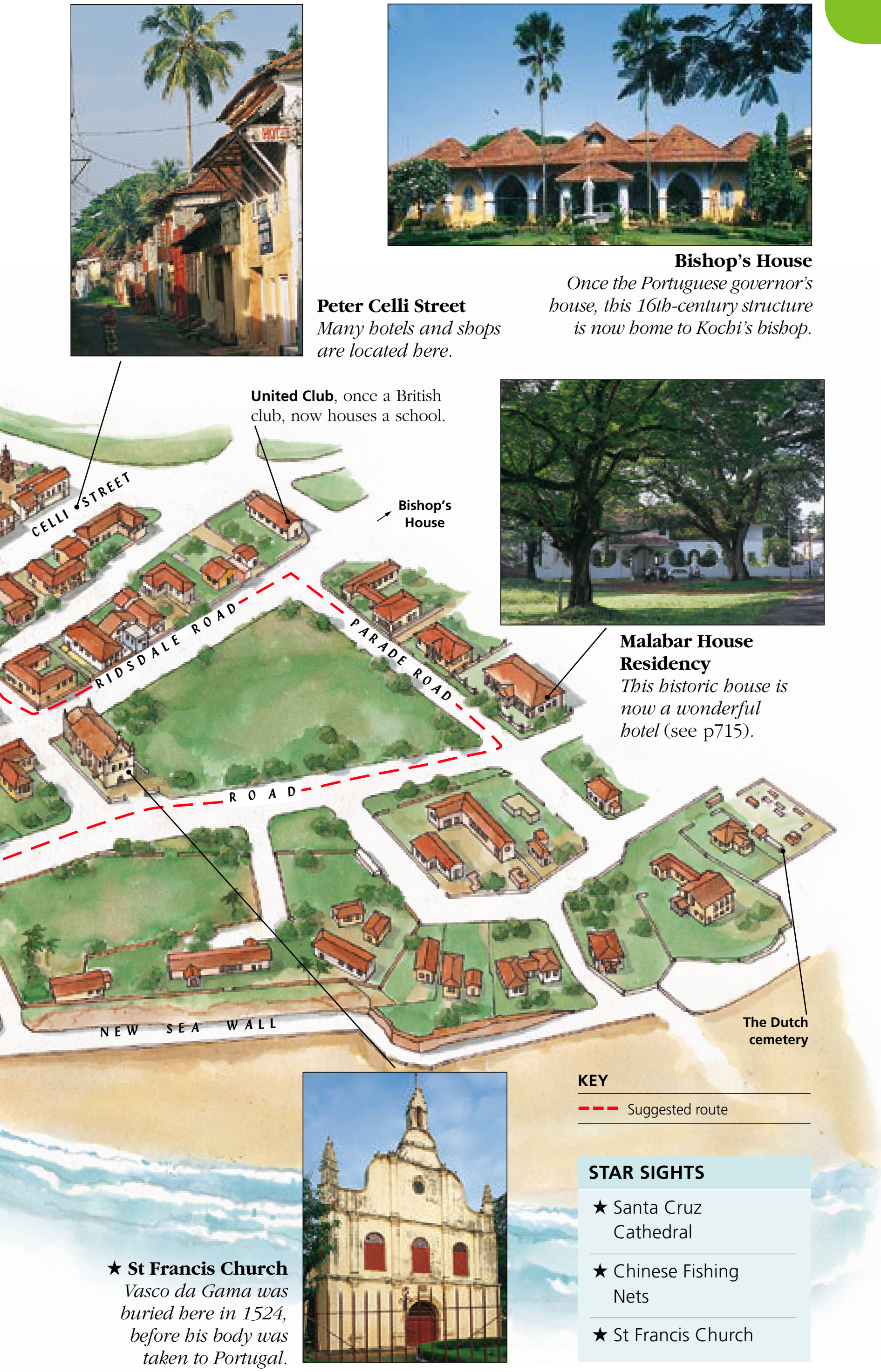
Kashi Art Café
This charming restaurant, in an old Dutch building, houses an art gallery.



Koder House
The residence of Satu Koder, patriarch of Kochi's Jews, was built by his ancestors in 1808. It has now been converted into a boutique hotel.



★ Chinese Fishing Nets
First erected between 1350 and 1450, these cantilevered fishing nets indicate trade links with China.



Peter Celli Street
Many hotels and shops are located here.

Bishop's House
Once the Portuguese governor's house, this 16th-century structure is now home to Kochi's bishop.

United Club, once a British club, now houses a school.

Malabar House Residency
This historic house is now a wonderful hotel (see p715).

★ St Francis Church
Vasco da Gama was buried here in 1524, before his body was taken to Portugal.

CELLI STREET
Bishop's House
RIDSDALE ROAD
PARADE ROAD
ROAD
NEW SEA WALL
The Dutch cemetery

KEY

🟥 Suggested route

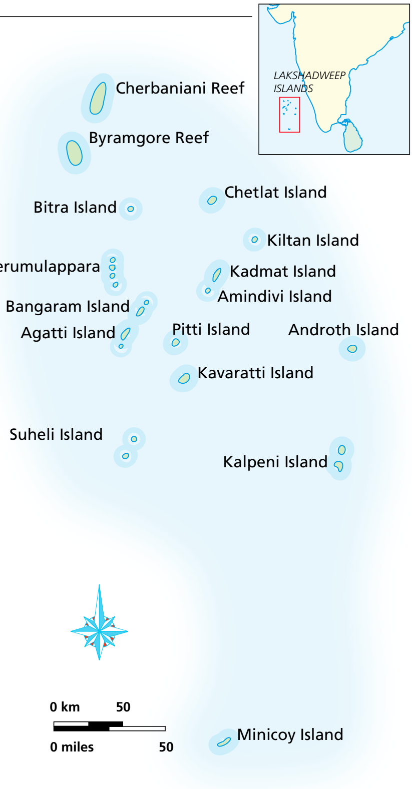
STAR SIGHTS

- ★ Santa Cruz Cathedral
- ★ Chinese Fishing Nets
- ★ St Francis Church

Lakshadweep Islands ⑪

Bird of paradise

Formerly the Laccadives, the Lakshadweep Islands are an archipelago of 36 exquisite coral islands, with untouched beaches and verdant coconut groves, scattered off the Kerala coast in the Arabian Sea. With a total land area of only 32 sq km (12 sq miles), Lakshadweep (which means 100,000 islands) is the smallest Union Territory in India. The atolls enclose shallow lagoons harbouring India's richest diversity of coral varieties, and a multitude of colourful reef fish. Only two islands, Bangaram and Kadmat, are open to foreign visitors, while Indian visitors have a choice of six; all offer superb snorkelling and scuba-diving.


LAKSHADWEEP ISLANDS
Cherbaniani Reef
Byramgore Reef
Chetlat Island
Bitra Island
Kiltan Island
Perumulappara
Kadmat Island
Amindivi Island
Bangaram Island
Agatti Island
Pitti Island
Androth Island
Kavaratti Island
Suheli Island
Kalpeni Island
0 km
50
0 miles
50
Minicoy Island

Wind-surfing in the Lakshadweep Islands

Kavaratti Island

450 km (280 miles) W of Kochi. ⛴ ○ *to Indian passport holders only.* ⛵

Lakshadweep's administrative headquarters, Kavaratti is the busiest island, and home to a large number of mainlanders, most of whom work for the government. It has beautiful white beaches and its crystal-clear lagoon is popular with water sports enthusiasts.

There are 52 mosques on the island that cater to the predominantly Muslim population. The **Ujra Mosque** has an ornate ceiling, carved from driftwood. The island also has a **Marine Aquarium**, which displays a variety of tropical fish and corals.

Huts at Bangaram Island Resort

Agatti Island

55 km (34 miles) NW of Kavaratti Island. ✈ ⛴ ○ *to Indian passport holders only.* ⛵

Lakshadweep's only airport is on Agatti Island. It has a fine lagoon and offers easy access for day visits to the uninhabited islands of Bangaram, Tinnakara and Parali I and II. Although all visitors arriving by plane must go through Agatti, the island itself is not open to foreign visitors.

Bangaram Island

58 km (36 miles) NW of Kavaratti. ⛴ ⛵

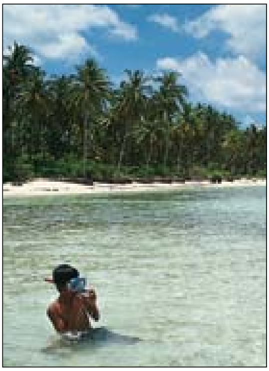
The uninhabited Bangaram Island is covered with dense groves of coconut palms and has lovely sandy beaches.

The **Bangaram Island Resort** *(see p715)*, run by Casino Hotels of Kochi, has about 30 rooms as well as a restaurant and bar. Its lagoon, rich with corals and tropical fish, is excellent for scuba diving and snorkelling. Visitors can also choose from the variety of water sports available, including sailing. A health certificate from a doctor is required for diving.

Kadmat Island

70 km (44 miles) N of Kavaratti Island. ⛴ ⛵

Thickly covered with palm trees, Kadmat Island has two fine lagoons, to the east and west. The **Water Sports Institute** offers canoeing,



Snorkelling in Lakshadweep Islands' crystal-clear waters

Fisherfolk picking mussels among reefs in the shallows

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Union Territory of Lakshadweep. 200–450 km (124–280 miles) W of Kochi. 👥 *10,150 (Kavaratti).* ✈ *from Kochi to Agatti.* ⛴ *from Kochi (30 hours).* ⛴ *Boats are available for trips between the islands.* ℹ *A trip to Lakshadweep is only possible as part of a package tour; individual bookings are not permitted. For bookings contact Lakshadweep Tourism's Society for Nature Tourism & Sports (SPORTS) office in Kochi, (0484) 266 8387. For enquiries contact the Delhi office, (011) 2338 6807.* **Travel permits** *These are mandatory and take at least two months to procure* (see p758), *contact the Kochi SPORTS office. Many agencies run tours between October and March.*

kayaking and glass-bottomed boat rides, and the **Lacadives Dive School**, on the same premises, offers snorkelling and scuba diving and has qualified instructors.

⛵ **Water Sports Institute**
SPORTS Office, Kochi.
Tel *(0484) 266 8387.*

⛵ **Lacadives Dive School**
Tel *Mumbai, (022) 5662 7381; Kochi, (0484) 236 7752.*
www.lacadives.com

Kalpeni Island

125 km (78 miles) SE of Kavaratti Island. ⛴ ○ *to Indian passport holders only.* ⛵

The clear, shallow lagoon of Kalpeni Island is the largest in Lakshadweep. With excellent reefs, Kalpeni is ideal for diving and snorkelling. Coral debris, deposited by a storm in 1847, has formed raised banks on the eastern and southern shores. Kalpeni's inhabitants were among the earliest islanders to send girls to school, paving the way for other islanders who had traditionally kept their girls and women confined to the home.

A hermit crab coming out of a shell

Minicoy Island

250 km (155 miles) S of Kavaratti Island. ⛴ ○ *to Indian passport holders only.*

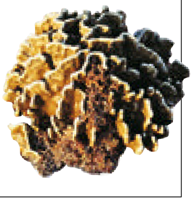
Lakshadweep's southernmost island, Minicoy has a unique culture influenced by the neighbouring Maldives. Mahl, spoken here, is a dialect of the Maldivian Dhivehi, which is related to the Indo-Persian languages with a script written from right to left. Minicoy is often referred to as "Women's Island", as its ten villages are matrilineal. It is also rich in the performing arts; the traditional Lava dance is performed on festive occasions. Tuna fishing has become an important activity, with the establishment of a tuna canning factory.

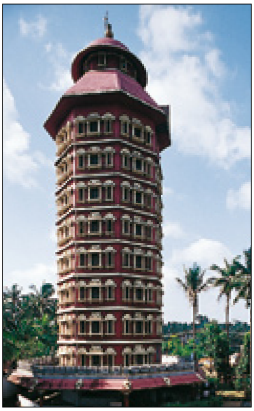
Minicoy has a grand lagoon, and is the only island in the archipelago with a stretch of mangroves along its shores. A large lighthouse, built by the British in 1885, commands an impressive view of the sea.

MARINE LIFE IN THE CORAL REEFS

The Lakshadweep Islands are a conglomeration of atolls – ring-shaped coral reef formations – that are the richest coral reefs found in India. Formed over thousands of years, they are made up of billions of minute organisms called polyps. Related to sea anemones, polyps build their skeletons outside their body. As they grow, their limestone skeletons become elaborate coral formations, with new colonies spreading over dead ones, and eventually turn into formidable reefs. The complex and fragile reef ecosystem is alive with an extraordinary range of plants and marine life. Over 600 species of reef fish, such as clown fish and parrot fish in a dazzling array of colours, giant clams with purple lips, delicate sea fans and sea anemones, ink-blue starfish, dolphins, harmless sharks and marine turtles, make up the spectacular diversity of the underwater world. (For tips on eco-friendly diving, see p619.)

Parali Island, one of Lakshadweep's many atolls


Corals *of a 100-odd varieties, including the boulder-like porites, the ridged brain (right), and the branched staghorn, can be seen here. The myriad colours are produced by the variety of algae that grow on them.*



The nine-tiered tower dedicated to Shankaracharya, Kaladi

Kaladi ⑫

Ernakulam district. 35 km (22 miles) NE of Kochi. 🚌

This quiet town on the banks of the beautiful Periyar river is celebrated as the birthplace of the great philosopher, Shankaracharya. Two shrines, built in 1910 on the river bank, honour his memory. One is dedicated to him and the other to the goddess Sharada, and both are maintained by the Sringeri Matha *(see p527)*.

Nearby is a spot known as Brindavan, where the Shankaracharya's mother, Aryamba, was cremated. The old Shri Krishna Temple, near the Sharada Temple, has an image of the deity, said to have been installed by Shankaracharya himself. On the road to the Krishna Temple is a 46-m (151-ft) tall, nine-tiered octagonal tower, the Shri Adi Shankaracharya Kirti Stambha Mandapa. Each of its floors commemorates the life and works of Shankaracharya.

Environs

The **Malayattor Church**, 8 km (5 miles) east of Kaladi, is said to be where St Thomas erected a cross. The 1,000-year old rock-cut **Kalill Temple**, 22 km (14 miles) southeast of Kaladi, was originally a Jain temple. It is now dedicated to the mother goddess. Unlike at other temples, a female elephant is used in all ceremonial rituals.

Munnar ⑬

Idukki district. 130 km (81 miles) N of Kochi. 🚌 ℹ *Tourist Information Centre, Munnar, (04865) 23 1516.* 🕒 *daily.*

The picturesque little town of Munnar lies at a height of about 1,800 m (5,906 ft), in a part of the Western Ghats known as the High Ranges. The name Munnar (which means "Three Rivers" in Tamil) is derived from its location at the confluence of three mountain streams – Kundala, Mudrapuzha and Nallathanni.

Located in 24,000 ha (59,305 acres) of sprawling tea estates, first established by the British in 1878, Munnar was once a summer resort for the British government in South India. The most important plantation in the High Ranges today belongs to Tata Tea, which oversees almost every public facility in the vicinity. The quaint High Range Club, made of wicker and teak, still serves as a social centre for Munnar's planters and, with its customary "gentlemen's bar", retains an old-world atmosphere.

Munnar remains a popular destination for visitors from Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Because of this, the town and its environs have witnessed a proliferation of hotels, restaurants and shopping centres. However, areas further away from the city centre remain relatively unspoilt, and the gentle hills offer excellent cycle rides and walks.

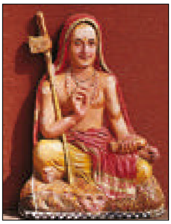
Environs

Mattupetty Lake, 13 km (8 miles) north of Munnar, is surrounded by lovely semi-alpine scenery. A specialized cattle-breeding centre is located nearby.

A view of the tea plantations around Munnar

ADI SHANKARACHARYA (AD 788–820)

Adi Shankaracharya, only 32 when he died, travelled the length and breadth of India, wrote erudite commentaries on Hindu scriptures, and composed devotional poems and prayers. The core of his monist philosophy is that there is only one reality and that is Brahman, the all-pervading cosmic force of which the human soul is a part, while all material objects are mere illusions *(maya)*. The Buddhist elements in his philosophy provoked, during his lifetime, the orthodox Brahminical charge that he was a "Buddha in disguise". His historical importance lies in the fact that he provided an intellectual basis to Hindusim.



The philosopher Adi Shankaracharya

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp714–17 and pp742–3

The captivating landscape of Eravikulam National Park

Eravikulam National Park ⑭

Idukki district. 16 km (10 miles) NE of Munnar. 🚌 *or auto-rickshaw from Munnar to Rajamalai, the entry point.* ℹ *For information contact Divisional Forest Officer, Munnar, (04865) 23 1587.* ○ *Aug–May.* 💰

The rolling high-altitude grasslands, a striking contrast to the dense *sholas* or tropical montane forests of the valleys, are unique to the mountain landscape of the Western Ghats. Easily the best preserved stretch of this extraordinarily beautiful landscape is the Eravikulam National Park, spread across an area of 97 sq km (38 sq miles) at the base of the **Anaimudi Mountain**. With a height of 2,695 m (8,842 ft), this has the distinction of being the highest peak south of the Himalayas. Anaimudi, which means "Elephant Head", not surprisingly resembles one. The peak and its environs provide good hiking territory.

The park, on the border of Kerala and Tamil Nadu, was established in 1978 with the specific aim of conserving the endangered Nilgiri tahr, a rare breed of mountain goat *(see p19)*. Today, the park is home to about 3,000 tahr, the single largest population of this slate-grey goat in the world. Extremely agile, it inhabits the rocky slopes, and can be observed at surprisingly close quarters. The park is also home to macaques, leopards, and packs of *dhole*, the rare Indian wild dog. Its streams contain trout, and there are also more than 90 species of birds, including song birds such as the laughing thrush.

Eravikulam is regarded as one of the best managed national parks in the country. The Muduvan tribals, who live at the periphery of the park, are employed to assist in its conservation. Their traditional method of selectively burning parts of the grassland prevents large forest fires, and also helps regenerate the tender grass on which young tahr feed. Eravikulam is also famous for the *kurunji (Strobilanthes kunthianus)*, the blue flowers that suddenly bloom en masse every 12 years and transform the rocky landscape into a sea of blue. The *kurunji* is next expected to bloom here in 2006.

Kurunji flower in full bloom

Kodungallur ⑮

Thrissur district. 32 km (20 miles) N of Kochi. 🚌 🎉 *Id (Feb/Mar), Bharani Festival (Mar/Apr).*

Known as Muziris to the Greeks, and Cranganore to the Europeans, Kodungallur was the historic capital of the Cheraman Perumals, monarchs of the Chera empire *(see p43)*. Situated at the mouth of the Periyar river, this was the Malabar Coast's main port until a flood tide in 1341 silted up the harbour. After this catastrophe, Kochi *(see p642)* became the main port.

The town is today a major destination for Hindus, Christians and Muslims alike. The **Bhagavati Temple**, in the city centre, is the venue of a three-day festival of erotic song and dance. This temple was originally the shrine of a Dravidian goddess. It was then taken over by either the Buddhists or the Jains. The festival marks the reclaiming of the site for the goddess.

St Thomas *(see p573)* is said to have landed here in AD 52. The **Mar Thoma Pontifical Shrine** houses a sacred relic that was brought from the Vatican in 1953 to celebrate the anniversary of the saint's arrival 1,900 years earlier.

The **Cheraman Mosque**, 2 km (1.3 miles) from the city centre, was built in AD 629 by Malik Bin Dinar, who introduced Islam to Kerala. Perhaps the first mosque in India, it resembles a Hindu temple.

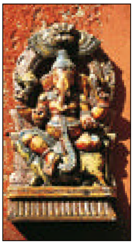
KERALA'S MATRILINEAL FAMILY SYSTEM

Called *marumakkathayam* in Kerala, the matrilineal family system, whereby inheritance is determined through the female line, is believed to have evolved in the late 10th century. This was a period of internecine warfare, and by placing women at the core of the inheritance, men could go to battle, knowing that their children's material well-being was protected. Children thus bear their mother's family name, and are identified as members of her family, with her brothers performing the role of the father figure. The Nairs are best known for this system, since warriors traditionally came from this community. Anthropologists, however, have traced its origin to the cult of the mother goddess widely prevalent in Kerala.

A Nair matriarch from Kerala

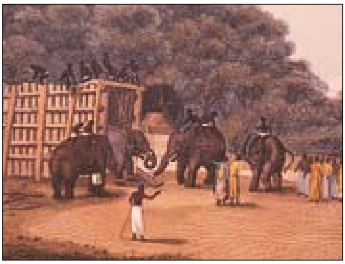
The Asian Elephant

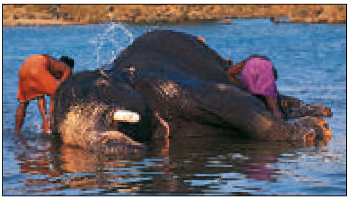
Literature, art and culture in India celebrate the elephant. Ganesha, the elephant-headed son of Shiva and Parvati, is the Remover of Obstacles, and his name is invoked before any important task is undertaken *(see p467)*. Unlike in the rest of India, Ganesha is a minor deity in Kerala. Yet, elephants play a major role in the daily life and festivals of the people of Kerala, who have a uniquely close and affectionate relationship with elephants. Though mainly used as draught animals, elephants also participate in temple rituals, where they carry the deity in sacred processions. For such occasions, elephants are splendidly caparisoned with ornaments of gold. The wealthier temples have their own elephants.


Ganesha, the elephant god

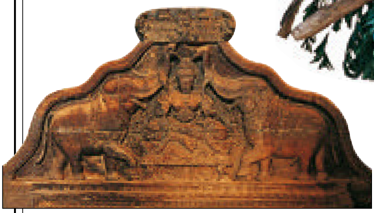
ASIAN ELEPHANT
Denizen of the forests and floodplains of the Himalayan foothills, Central India and the southern highlands, the Asian elephant *(Elephas maximus)* is not as tall as the African elephant, and has smaller ears.

The tusker *(a male with large tusks) faces great danger from poaching, despite the ban on ivory.*


This 19th-century print *shows how trained elephants were used to capture wild ones by driving them into* khedas *(corrals).*


Temple elephants *are usually bought at the Sonepur Mela in Bihar* (see p216)*. The mahout devotes hours every day to grooming and training them for temple festivals. All commands are given in Malayalam.*

In Kerala, *elephants are often seen carrying their own feed. Most people allow mahouts to cut as many fronds of palm as the animal needs – up to 200 kg (441 lb) a day.*

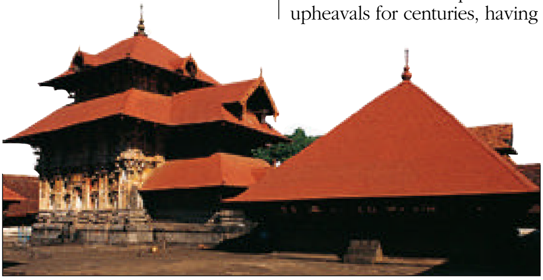

Icons and motifs *depicting the elephant are common in Indian art, as they are an integral part of Hindu mythology and pageantry.*

View of the Catholic Lourdes Cathedral in Thrissur

Thrissur ⑯

Thrissur district. 80 km (50 miles) N of Kochi. *317,500.* *Tourist Office, Govt Guest House, (0487) 232 0800.* *Thrissur Pooram (Apr/May), Kamdassamkadavu Boat Races (Aug/Sep).*

This town, built around an elevated area called The Round, was planned during the reign of Raja Rama Varma, the ruler of Cochin (Kochi) in the 18th century. In the heart of The Round is the multi-roofed **Vadakkunnathan Temple**. This great Shiva temple was built in the 9th century, and has superb woodcarvings and rich decorative murals. The splendid Pooram festival is held here each year, with the main activities taking place outside the temple walls (non-Hindus are not permitted inside the shrine).



Vadakkunnathan Temple in Thrissur

Northeast of the temple is the State Museum, displaying a good collection of murals, woodcarvings, sculpture and antique ornaments. The Archaeological Museum nearby is currently undergoing renovation.

Entrance, Shri Krishna Temple

Thrissur is often dubbed Kerala's cultural capital as the town is home to two prestigious state-run cultural institutions. These are the Kerala Sangeetha Nataka Academy (for music and theatre) and the Kerala Sahitya Academy (for literature).

The town suffered political upheavals for centuries, having been successively ruled by the Zamorins of Kozhikode *(see p653)*, Tipu Sultan of Mysore and the rulers of Kochi. The Dutch and the British have also made their presence felt in the history of this district, as is evident from the many impressive churches, such as the late 19th-century **Lourdes Cathedral**, around the town.

Environs

Guruvayur, 29 km (18 miles) north of Thrissur, has Kerala's most popular temple. Legend has it that the 16th-century Shri Krishna Temple was created by Guru ("Instructor of the Gods"), and Vayu ("God of the Winds"). The temple's elephant sanctuary is within the compound of an old palace nearby. It houses more than 40 elephants that belong to the deity – it is customary to present an elephant as an offering here.

The renowned performing arts and teaching centre, the **Kerala Kala Mandalam**, is 32 km (20 miles) northeast of Thrissur. Founded in 1930 by the famous Malayali poet, Vallathol Narayan Menon, at Cheruthuruthy, it offers intensive training in Kathakali, Mohiniattam and Koodiyattam dance forms. Instrumental and vocal music forms are taught here as well. The complex also has a large *natyagriha* (dance hall) for performances.

Kerala Kala Mandalam
Tel *(04884) 26 2305 for permission.*
○ *Mon–Fri.* ● *public hols, Apr/May.*

THE POORAM FESTIVAL

A *pooram* (meeting) is a temple festival marked by the ceremonious congregation, at a particular temple, of deities from various other temples. Though a number of *poorams* are held throughout Kerala, Thrissur's Pooram is the most spectacular. Held between April and May, it celebrates the processional arrival of two goddesses before Shiva, after whom the town is named. Through a sea of devotees and the hypnotic beat of percussion instruments, two rows of elephants, with the central ones carrying the deities, move majestically towards each other. A firework display ends the celebrations.

Elephants at the Pooram festival

Palakkad ⑰

Palakkad district. 99 km (62 miles) N of Kochi. 👥 *130,750.* 🚉 ℹ *Tourist Information Centre, near Children's Park, (0491) 253 8996.* 🎉 *Chariot Festival (Oct/Nov).*

Situated at the base of the Western Ghats, Palakkad (Palghat) derives its name from the dense forests *(kadu)* of *pala (Alsteria scholaris)* trees that once covered the land. Today, however, paddy fields and tobacco plantations have taken their place.

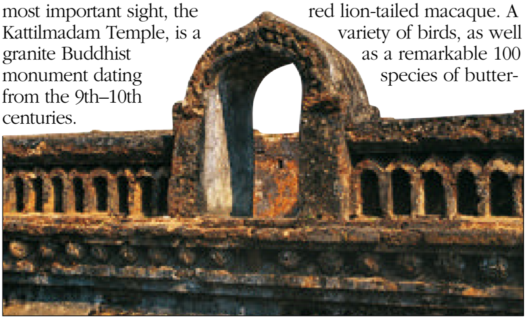
Tipu's Fort, in the heart of the town, was built by Haider Ali of Mysore in 1766; it was subsequently occupied by the British after they defeated his son and successor, Tipu Sultan *(see p517)*, some 30 years later. This sombre, granite structure now houses various government offices.

The large **Vishwanatha Temple**, on the banks of the Kalpathy river, is famous for its chariot procession.

On the outskirts of town are the extensive **Malampuzha Gardens**, laid out above a huge irrigation dam built across the Malampuzha river. Pleasant boat cruises are possible on a large lake, nestling in the foothills.

Environs

The town of **Kollengode** is 19 km (12 miles) south of Palakkad and is set in pastoral surroundings. The Vishnu Temple and Kollengode Palace are worth a visit. **Thrithala**, 75 km (47 miles) west of Palakkad, has a Shiva temple and the ruins of a mud fort. Its most important sight, the Kattilmadam Temple, is a granite Buddhist monument dating from the 9th–10th centuries.



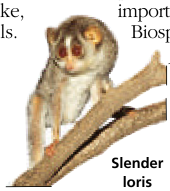
The desolate ruins of Tipu's Fort at Palakkad

Silent Valley, a haven of rare plants and herbs

Silent Valley National Park ⑱

Palakkad district. 88 km (55 miles) NW of Kochi. 🚌 *Mannarkkad, the entry point. Jeeps available to Mukkali.* ℹ *For permits contact the Wildlife Warden, Mannarkkad, (04924) 25 3225.*

The Silent Valley National Park, spread over an area of 90 sq km (35 sq miles), preserves what is perhaps the country's last substantial stretch of virgin tropical evergreen forest. An important part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve *(see p520)*, it represents some of the spectacular biodiversity of the Western Ghats. The park is renowned for its rare plants and herbs, which include over 100 species of orchids. Wildlife includes tigers, elephants, the Nilgiri langur, the sloth bear, the shy nocturnal slender loris, and the endangered lion-tailed macaque. A variety of birds, as well as a remarkable 100 species of butterflies and 400 species of moths, are also found here. Visitors can trek to the source of the Kunthipuzha river which flows through this valley. Accommodation is available at the forest lodge in Mukkali, just outside the park.



Slender loris

Malappuram ⑲

Malappuram district. 153 km (95 miles) N of Kochi. 🚌 ℹ *(0483) 2733 1504.* 🕐 *daily.* 🎉 *Valiya Nercha (Feb/Mar), Shivratri (Feb/Mar).*

This "land atop hills" stands at the entrance to the Malabar region, and is crossed by three major rivers – the Chaliyar, the Kadalundi and the Bharatapuzha. A military centre of the Zamorins of Calicut, it was the scene of fierce fighting between British forces and the Mopplahs (Muslim peasants), known as the Mopplah Revolt. The most serious uprising occurred in 1921, after which many rebels were exiled to the Andamans *(see pp618-19)*. The old British barracks, on a hilltop overlooking the Kadalundi river, now houses the district administration. Malappuram is also an important seat of both Hindu and Islamic learning.

Environs

Kerala's pioneering Ayurvedic institution *(see p629)* is at **Kottakkal**, 12 km (7 miles) southwest of Malappuram. Started in 1902, the Kottakkal Arya Vaidyasala is based in a splendid building, and has a

Arya Vaidyasala, at Kottakkal

research centre and hospital. **Tirur**, 32 km (20 miles) southwest of Malappuram, was the 16th-century birthplace of the father of Malayalam literature, Tunchat Ramanuja Ezhuthachan. He also taught the Malayalam alphabet to children, a practice that continues at a shrine dedicated to him.

One of the earliest Portuguese settlements on the Malabar Coast was at **Tanur**, 34 km (21 miles) southwest of Malappuram. St Francis Xavier *(see p498)* is said to have come here in 1546.

Kozhikode ⑳

Kozhikode district. 254 km (158 miles) N of Kochi. 👥 *436,600.* ✈ *Karipur, 25 km (16 miles) S of city centre.* 🚆 🚌 ℹ *District Tourism Promotion Council, (0495) 273 4355.* 🎉 *Shivratri Utsavam (Feb/Mar).*

This busy commercial town, better known throughout the world as Calicut, was the capital of the kingdom of the powerful Zamorins (a Portuguese corruption of their title, Samoothiri). Under them the town prospered as a major centre of the Malabar trade in spices and textiles, and it was from Calicut that the word calico originated as the term for white, unbleached cotton.

It was in Calicut, too, that Vasco da Gama, the intrepid Portuguese explorer who discovered the sea route to India, was first received by the Zamorin in his palace in May 1498. Dominating the city centre is the large Manamchira Tank, flanked by the Town Hall and the Public Library, both fine examples of traditional architecture. A striking Roman Catholic cathedral also stands near the Manamchira Tank.

The town's Muslim heritage is indicated by its numerous mosques, remarkable for their massive size and elaborate wood carvings. Among these, the Mishqal Palli, near the port, is the most impressive, with a five-tiered tiled roof.

The **Pazhassirajah Museum** exhibits wood and metal sculptures, models of temples and reconstructions of megalithic monuments. The Art Gallery next door has paintings by Raja Ravi Varma, the 19th-century painter who belonged to a princely family from Travancore *(see p626)*. Kozhikode's busy shopping area, the quaintly-named **Sweetmeats Street**, was once lined with shops selling the famous Calicut *halwa*, a brightly coloured sweet made of flour and sugar. Today, SM Street, as it is popularly known, has only a few shops that sell *halwa*. Court Road, leading off SM Street, houses the bustling Spice Market. Kozhikode is today the storage and trading centre for hill produce from Wynad *(see p654)*; spices such as cloves, cardamom, pepper, turmeric and coffee are sorted and packaged in the old warehouses along the waterfront.

🏛 **Pazhassirajah Museum**
East Hill. ***Tel*** *(0495) 238 1253.*
○ *Tue–Sun.*

Environs

A short 16-km (10-mile) drive north of the city leads to the small village of **Kappad**, where a stone plaque on the beach commemorates the spot where Vasco da Gama is supposed to have landed in 1498.

The historic village of **Beypore**, 10 km (6 miles) south of Kozhikode, is believed to be the fabled Ophir, referred to in ancient Greek and Roman texts. Artisans still follow the traditional methods of their forefathers at this ancient shipbuilding centre *(see p633)*. The type of dhows that were built here for Arab merchants more than 1,500 years ago are still in demand in West Asia. Old vessels are also brought here to be repaired.

Thusharagiri, 50 km (31 miles) away from Kozhikode, is a plantation town that abounds in rubber, arecanut, pepper, ginger and spices. It is also a trekking and rock climbing destination. The surrounding hills offer some exciting trails. One of the most popular is a 12-km (7.5-mile) long trek that crosses three lovely waterfalls, one of which falls from a height of 75 m (246 ft), and climbs up through dense evergreen forests where a variety of birds and animals can be spotted. The nearest airport is at Karipur, about 23 km (14 miles) from Kozhikode.

Fishermen with colorful nets in the harbor of Beypore.

The Tree House in Wynad, blending into the sylvan landscape

Wynad District ㉑

280 km (174 miles) NE from Kochi to Kalpetta. 🚌 ℹ *Tourist Information centre, Kalpetta, (04936) 20 4441.*

A remote region of virgin rainforests and mist-clad mountain ranges, Wynad provides the ideal climatic conditions for Kerala's extensive plantations of cardamom, pepper, coffee and rubber. Relatively untouched by modernization, this is the homeland of large groups of indigenous tribal communities, such as the cave-dwelling Cholanaikens, and the downtrodden Paniyas, who until 50 years ago were sold as bonded labour to plantation owners. It is also the favoured habitat of animals such as the, Nilgiri langur, wild elephants and the giant Malabar squirrel.

The gateway to Wynad is **Lakkidi**, at its southern end. An ancient tree on the main highway, ominously draped with a heavy iron chain, presents a curious sight. Local legend claims that it binds the angry spirit of a Paniya tribal who showed a group of British surveyors the path through the dense forest. Instead of being rewarded, he was killed here and his spirit apparently haunted the highway until it was exorcised.

Kalpetta, the district headquarters, is 15 km (9 miles) to the north. Once a major Jain centre *(see p396)* this has two Jain temples situated nearby. The Anantanathaswami Temple is at Puliyarmala, 6 km (4 miles) away, while the Glass Temple of Koottamunda, dedicated to the third Jain *tirthankara*, Parsvanatha, is on the slope of Vallarimal Hill, 20 km (12 miles) to the south. The area's tallest peak, Chembara Peak (2,100 m/6,890 ft) is 14 km (9 miles) southwest of Kalpetta, and is excellent for trekking and birdwatching.

Coffee blossoms in a Wynad plantation

Sulthan's Bathery (Sultan's Battery), 10 km (6 miles) east of Kalpetta, derives its name from Tipu Sultan of Mysore *(see p517)*, who built a fort here in the 18th century. The **Edakkal Caves** are 12 km (7 miles) away. Their inscriptions and carvings of human and animal figures are said to date to prehistoric times; some believe that these caves were the refuge of Jain monks. The caves' environs abound in megaliths. The **Wynad (Muthanga) Wildlife Sanctuary**, 16 km (10 miles) east of Sulthan's Battery, was established in 1973 and is part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve *(see p520)*.

Mananthavady, 35 km (22 miles) north of Kalpetta, was the scene of a long guerrilla war between the local king, Pazhassi Raja, and British troops, led by Lord Arthur Wellesley, the future Duke of Wellington who defeated Napoleon at Waterloo. About 32 km (20 miles) to the north is the Vishnu Temple at Thirunelli, built beside the Paapanassini river. This is a major pilgrimage site, where Hindus perform funeral rites.

Edakkal Caves
○ *daily.* ☞ 💰

Wynad Sanctuary
💰 ☞ *extra charges. Permits from Wildlife Warden, Sulthan Bathery, (04936) 22 0454.*

The remains of Tipu's fort, Sulthan's Battery

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp714–17 and pp742–3

Mahe ㉒

Union Territory of Pondicherry. Mahe district. 48 km (30 miles) N of Kozhikode. 🚌 ℹ *Govt Tourist Home, (0495) 270 2304.* *St Theresa's Feast (Oct).*

Situated on the Mayyazhi river, this former French enclave is named after the French admiral, Mahe de La Bourdonnais, who landed here in November 1741. A French colony until 1954, it is today part of the Union Territory of Pondicherry *(see p586)*. Only some traces of Mahe's colonial heritage remain, among them the beautiful old residence of the French administrator, at the mouth of the river. It is now the office-cum-residence of the Indian government's administrator. Mahe's main church, the whitewashed, Baroque St Theresa's Church, is situated on the highway. The town's main "industry" seems to centre around the supply of cheap alcohol, attracting truck drivers and motorists who come here from nearby areas to stock up.

Thalaserry ㉓

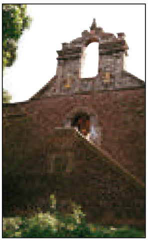
Kannur district. 255 km (158 miles) N of Kochi. 🚆 🚌

Fishing is a major occupation in Thalaserry (once known as Tellicherry), and observing the bartering of the day's catch can be an enjoyable experience. The British East India Company established one of their first trading posts at Thalaserry at the end of the 17th century. In 1708, they built the enormous laterite fort on the coast. An old lighthouse still stands on its ramparts, and there are also two secret tunnels, one of which leads into the sea.

Fishmongers awaiting the daily catch at Thalaserry

The Thalaserry Cricket Club, founded in 1860, is one of the oldest in India, as cricket was introduced here in the late 18th century.

This region is one of the main centres of *kalaripayattu (see p626)*, a fact that has made it a training ground for circus artistes as well. It is a common sight to see young men in the *kalari* (gymnasium), exercising to tone their muscles and practising with wooden weapons. Many images of deities adorn the *kalari*, giving it a sacred character.



façade of the fort, Thalassery

Kannur ㉔

Kannur district. 66 km (41 miles) N of Kochi. 🚆 🚌 ℹ *District Tourism Promotion Council, Taluk Office Campus, (0497) 270 6336.* *daily.*

This scenic coastal town, called Cannanore by European settlers, was an important maritime centre in the 14th and 15th centuries. The Portuguese built **St Angelo Fort**, 5 km (3 miles) south of the city, in 1505. This enormous laterite structure overlooks the fishing harbour and is protected by the sea on three sides. It was later occupied by the British, who established a large military garrison here.

Muzhapilangad Beach, 15 km (9 miles) south of Kannur, is a serene spot with a 4-km (2.5-mile) long sandy beach, safe for swimmers.

THEYYAM, KERALA'S SPECTACULAR DANCE-RITUAL

A Theyyam dancer clad in a colourful costume

This dance-ritual, particular to the north Malabar region, was originally aimed at appeasing ancient village deities, the mother goddess, folk heroes, ancestors and spirits. With the advent of Brahminism, Hindu divinities replaced many of the earlier ones, and the Theyyam pantheon shrank from 300 to around 40. The Theyyam presentation begins with the singing of the *thottam* (song) in praise of the deity relevant to that particular ritual. This is followed by the dance, the steps and postures of which show the strong influence of Kerala's martial arts tradition, *kalaripayattu*. Drums, pipes and cymbals provide the accompaniment. The performers, all male, wear masks, body paint, colourful costumes and imposing headgear *(mudi)*, which often rises to a staggering height of more than 2 m (7 ft). The tender leaves of the coconut palm are cut to various designs and shapes to form part of the elaborate costume of the dancer. Theyyams, usually annual rituals, are held between December and May. However, at the Parassinikadavu Temple, 20 km (12 miles) north of Kannur, Theyyam is performed every day.

The laterite ramparts of Bekal Fort, outside Kasaragod town

Kasaragod District ㉕

400 km (249 miles) S from Kochi to Kasaragod. 🚉 🚌 ℹ *Tourism Promotion Council (04994) 25 6450.*

Kerala's northernmost district, flanked by the Western Ghats to the east and the Arabian Sea to the west, is a fertile region of thickly forested hills and meandering rivers. The district is named after its main town, Kasaragod, a bustling centre of the coir and handloom industries. About 8 km (5 miles) north of Kasaragod, is the **Madhur Temple**. This beautiful temple, with its copper-plate roofing, has a commanding location overlooking the Madhuvahini river.

Situated 16 km (10 miles) south of Kasaragod is **Bekal Fort**, the largest and best-preserved fort in Kerala. This enormous, circular structure is built with large blocks of laterite, and its outer wall rises majestically from the sea to a height of 39 m (128 feet). Inside is a cunningly concealed tunnel that leads directly to the sea. The fort's origins are shrouded in mystery, though it is generally thought to have been built in the mid-1600s by a local chieftain Shivappa Nayak, whose fiefdom was in neighbouring Karnataka. The scene of much conflict, the fort was eventually occupied by the British after the defeat of Tipu Sultan *(see p517)*.

Many beautiful beaches lie to the north and south of the fort. The closest, **Pallikere Beach**, provides a spectacular view of the fort. The Kerala government, along with the Bekal Resorts Development Corporation, have plans to develop this area as a major tourist complex. About 6 km (4 miles) north of Bekal, **Kappil Beach** is a secluded area, ideal for swimming. Kodi Cliff, at one end of the beach, is a scenic spot with wonderful views of the sunset on the Arabian Sea.

A typical temple lamp

The **Chandragiri Fort**, on the banks of the Chandragiri river, is 10 km (6 miles) north of Bekal. This 17th-century fort is also attributed to Shivappa Nayak, who built it to defend his kingdom against the Vijayanagar rulers *(see pp530–31)*. The imposing Malik Dinar Mosque, nearby, is said to have been founded by Malik Ibn Dinar, a disciple of the Prophet Muhammad, who introduced Islam to Kerala in about AD 664. The grave of Malik Ibn Muhammed, a descendant of Malik Ibn Dinar, lies here. The 9th-century **Ananthapura Temple**, 30 km (19 miles) north of Bekal, is the only temple in Kerala erected in the centre of a lake. It is said to be the original abode of Ananthapadmanabha, the presiding deity of the Anantha Padmanabhaswamy Temple in Thiruvananthapuram, the state capital *(see p627)*.

The small hill station of **Ranipuram** is situated 85 km (53 miles) east of Kasaragod. Set amid acres of rubber and spice plantations, it offers good opportunities for trekking.

This region is also the centre for a number of performing arts, such as Theyyam *(see p655)* and Yakshagana, the elaborate folk art form from Karnataka *(see p535)*.

Ananthapura Temple, built in the middle of a lake

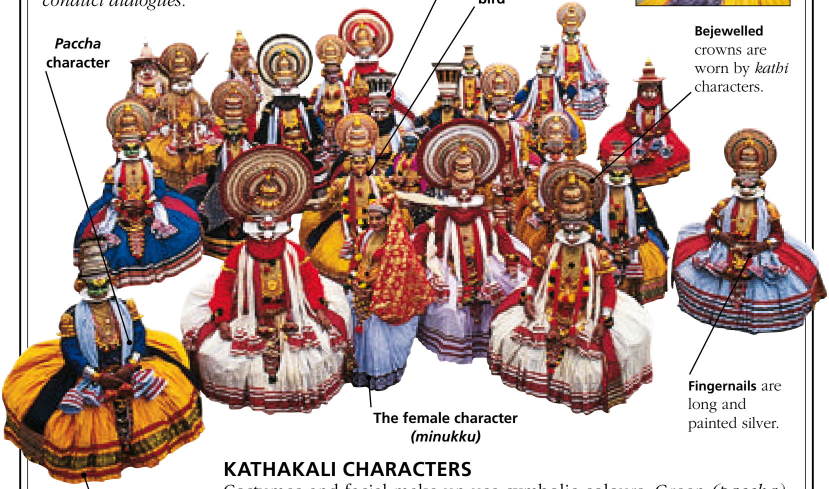
Kathakali: Kerala's Classical Dance-Drama

Literally meaning "story-play", Kathakali is a highly evolved classical form of dance, drama and music (both vocal and instrumental), that is almost 400 years old. Male actor-dancers, in voluminous colourful skirts, elaborate headdresses and jewellery, enact stories from the Puranas and epics, mainly the *Mahabharata (see p26)*. The story unfolds simply at first, before building to a dramatic climax. The frenetic drumming, the emotive singing and the rhythmic movements of the dancers reach a crescendo, as the many scenes of love and valour culminate in the triumph of good over evil. These are traditionally all-night performances, held in temple courtyards during religious festivals. Modern performances are shorter.

A noble *paccha* character

Facial movements *are used to convey emotions, and to conduct dialogues.*

Make-up, *a complex four-hour process, helps identify characters and define their roles. Mineral pigments and lamp black are the main ingredients. A paper frill defines the jaw line.*



***Paccha* character**

Tadi characters wear red, white or black beards.

Mythical bird

Bejewelled crowns are worn by *kathi* characters.

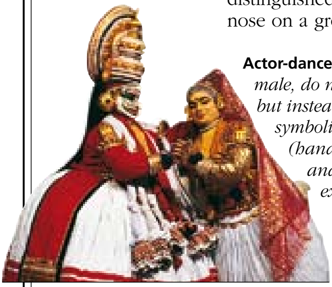
Fingernails are long and painted silver.

The female character *(minukku)*

Voluminous skirts

KATHAKALI CHARACTERS

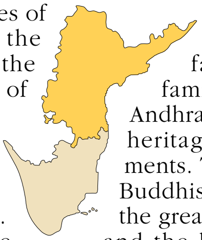
Costumes and facial make-up use symbolic colours. Green *(paccha)* signifies divine and heroic characters, such as Krishna and Arjuna, while royal though arrogant personalities, such as Ravana, are distinguished by the red *(kathi)* patch applied over the bridge of the nose on a green background. Black *(kari)* is used for demons.



Actor-dancers, *all male, do not speak but instead use symbolic* mudras *(hand gestures) and facial expressions, with immense eloquence.*

Percussion *is provided by two drums,* chenda *and* madalam. *The lead singer marks the beat with a* chengila *(gong), and his assistant plays the cymbals.*

ANDHRA PRADESH



From the unspoilt beaches of Visakhapatnam along the Coromandel Coast, to the emerald green paddy fields of Nellore district, much of Andhra Pradesh is occupied by the rocky Deccan Plateau which rises 1,000 m (3,281 ft) above the fertile coastal plains. This is South India's largest state, covering an area of 275,000 sq km (106,178 sq miles). The main language spoken by its 78 million people is Telugu, though Urdu is also spoken in the state capital, Hyderabad. This vibrant city was until 1947, the seat of the fabulously wealthy royal family, the Asaf Jahi Nizams. Andhra Pradesh's varied cultural heritage is visible in its monuments. These include the ancient Buddhist site at Nagarjunakonda, the great Islamic fort of Golconda and the hilltop Hindu temple at Tirupati, which attracts more pilgrims than any other temple in India. The state's distinctive handicrafts include superb woven ikat textiles, pearl jewellery and inlaid metal *bidri* work.

SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

Towns, Cities & Districts

East Godavari District ⑩
Hyderabad ①
Kondapalli ⑬
Machilipatnam ⑪
Pochampalli ③
Srikakulam District ⑨
Vijayawada ⑫
Visakhapatnam ⑥
Warangal ④

Historic Sites

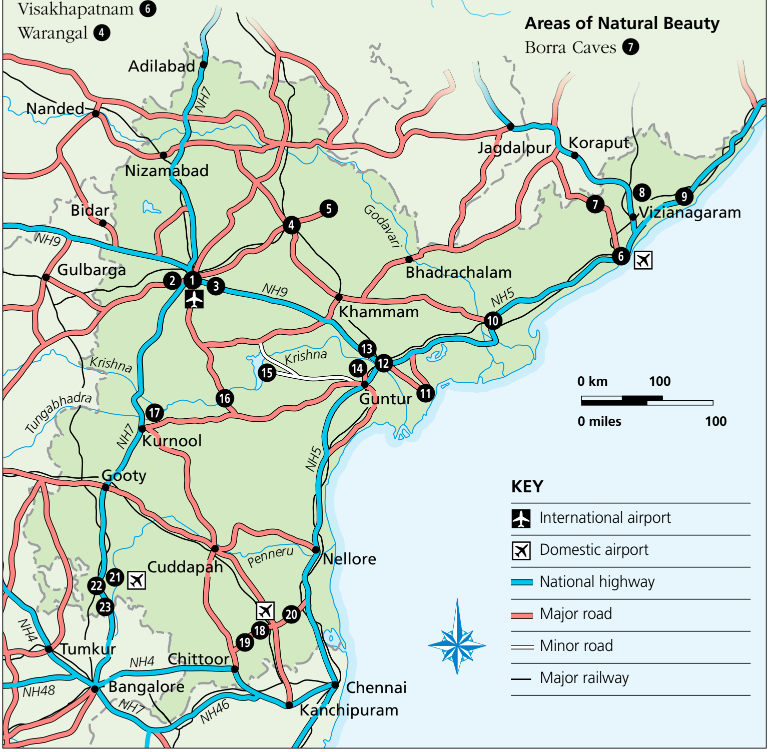
Amravati ⑭
Chandragiri ⑲
Golconda ②
Nagarjunakonda ⑮
Penukonda ㉒
Ramatirtham ⑧

Temples & Holy Places

Alampur ⑰
Lepakshi ㉓
Palampet ⑤
Puttaparthi ㉑
Sri Kalahasti ⑳
Srisailam & Krishna Gorge ⑯
Tirupati ⑱

Areas of Natural Beauty

Borra Caves ⑦


Adilabad
NH7
Nanded
Nizamabad
Bidar
NH9
Gulbarga
2
1
3
NH9
4
5
Godavari
Jagdalpur
Koraput
8
7
9
Vizianagaram
6
Bhadrachalam
NH5
Khammam
10
Krishna
13
12
14
15
Krishna
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Guntur
11
Tungabhadra
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NH7
Kurnool
NH5
Gooty
Cuddapah
Penneru
Nellore
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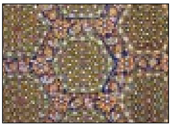
NH4
Tumkur
NH4
Chittoor
NH48
Bangalore
NH7
NH46
Chennai
Kanchipuram
0 km 100
0 miles 100
KEY
International airport
Domestic airport
National highway
Major road
Minor road
Major railway

◁ **Sunflowers, grown for their oil, in a field near Alampur in western Andhra Pradesh**

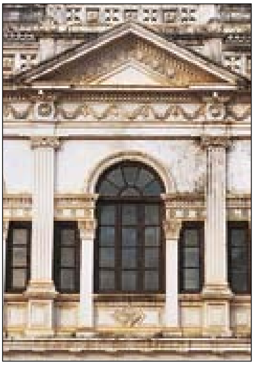
Hyderabad ❶



Enamel tiles, Badshahi Ashurkhana

The sixth largest city in India, Hyderabad was founded in 1591 and planned as a grid with the Charminar *(see pp662–3)* at its centre. It has now grown well beyond the confines of the original walled city, to include a new town north of the Musi river, the military cantonment at Secunderabad, and a burgeoning high-tech estate, nicknamed "Cyberabad". The city's sights include the grand palaces of its erstwhile rulers, the Nizams, and the colourful bazaars and mosques of the old city.

Portraits of Salarjung III and his son, painted on ivory



The Neo-Classical façade of the 19th-century Purani Haveli

Purani Haveli (Nizam's Museum)

Near Mir Alam Mandi Rd. ***Tel*** *(040) 2452 1029.* ○ *Sat–Thu.*

This sprawling complex of mid-19th-century Neo-Classical buildings was the main residence of the sixth Nizam, Mahbub Ali Pasha. A glimpse of his lavish lifestyle can be seen in the eastern wing of the main building, in the Massarat Mahal. This has the Nizam's gigantic wooden wardrobe, a 73-sq m (786-sq ft) room with closets on two levels, and a mechanical elevator affording access to the upper tier. Its contents once included 75 identical tweed suits – the Nizam liked the pattern so much that he bought the Scottish factory's entire stock of it.

Purani Haveli also houses the Nizam's Museum, which displays china, silver objets d'art, and several fascinating photographs that capture the legendary opulence of the Nizam and his court.

Salarjung Museum

Near Naya Pul. ***Tel*** *(040) 2452 3211.* ○ *Sat–Thu.* ● *public hols.*

This eclectic collection of over 40,000 objects once belonged to Salarjung III, Prime Minister of Hyderabad between 1899 and 1949. Salarjung's highly individual taste ranged from objects of sublime beauty to some bordering on kitsch, which is what makes this museum so fascinating.

The pride of the museum is the outstanding Mughal jade collection, which includes an exquisite, translucent leaf-shaped cup. Miniature paintings are also well-represented, including those of the local Deccani School *(see p543)*, as are Indian stone and bronze sculpture, inlaid ivory objects and medieval Islamic manuscripts. A prized 13th-century Koran has the signatures of three Mughal emperors.

Salarjung's rather florid taste in European art is represented by some 19th-century statuary, while the collection of oil paintings include a Canaletto, a Guardi and a Landseer.

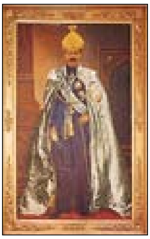
Osmania General Hospital

Afzalganj. ***Tel*** *(040) 2460 0121.* ○ *daily.*

A spectacular stone building with soaring domes, Osmania General Hospital was built in 1925 as part of the seventh Nizam's modernization plan after a catastrophic flood in 1908. Opposite it, across the river, are the **Boys' High School** and the **High Court**, built in pink granite and red sandstone. An imaginative blend of Islamic decorative detail and Western interior layouts, all three buildings, as

THE NIZAMS OF HYDERABAD

Hyderabad was India's biggest and richest princely state, as large as England and Scotland together. Its rulers, known as the Nizams, belonged to the Asaf Jahi dynasty, founded in 1724 by Nizam-ul-Mulk who first came to Hyderabad as the Mughal governor of the Deccan, and then established his independence as Mughal power in Delhi waned. The Nizams' fabulous wealth derived largely from their legendary hoard of emeralds and their diamond mines near Golconda, and many tales are told of their extravagance and eccentricities. The seventh and last Nizam, Osman Ali Khan, was the richest man in India but, unlike his ancestors, he was a notorious miser who smoked cigarette butts and wore the same set of shabby, patched clothes for weeks on end. After Independence in 1947, the Nizam resisted joining the Indian Union. However, riots broke out and Indian Army action to restore order finally led to the state's accession.



Portrait of the last Nizam (r.1911–48)

well as the city's Railway Station, were constructed between 1914 and 1936, and are the work of the British architect Vincent Esch.

Badshahi Ashurkhana

Patthergatti Rd. ○ *daily, with permission of the caretaker.*

This historic building, the Ashurkhana or "Royal House of Mourning", was built in 1595 by Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah, the fifth Qutb Shahi ruler *(see p667)*, as a congregation hall for Shias during the month of Muharram. It houses beautiful silver and gold *alams* (ceremonial standards) studded with precious stones, which are carried in procession during Muharram *(see p669)*, and are on display here through the year, on Thursdays.

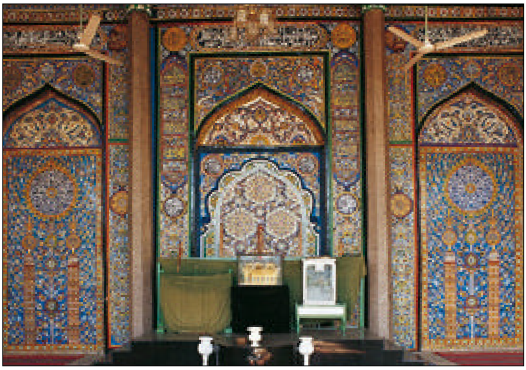
Exquisite enamel-tiled mosaics adorn the central niche and the western wall, in glowing yellow, orange and turquoise. The outer hall with wooden colonnades was added later.

Charminar

See pp662–3.

Mecca Masjid

See pp662–3.



Splendid 17th-century tiled mosaics in the Badshahi Ashurkhana

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

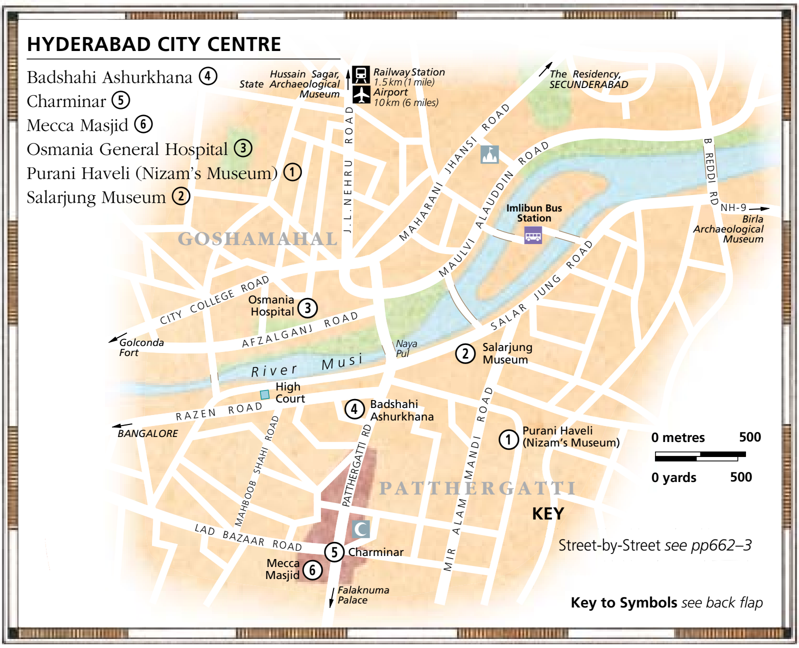
Ranga Reddy district. 688 km (428 miles) N of Chennai. 👥 *3,449,900.* ✈ *16 km (10 miles) N of city centre, then bus or taxi.* 🚉 🚌 ℹ *AP Tourism, (040) 2329 8456.* ⛺ *daily.* 🎉 *Muharram (Mar/Apr), Mrigasira (Jun).*

Falaknuma Palace

Near Naya Pul. ● *Closed for renovation, check for opening dates.*

The most opulent of the Nizams' many palaces, Falaknuma Palace was built in 1872. The front façade is in Palladian style, while the rear is a jumble of Indo-Saracenic domes and cupolas, added on to house the zenana. A huge amount of money was lavished on the interior, with tooled leather ceilings created by Florentine craftsmen, furniture and tapestries ordered from France, and marble imported from Italy.

The Nizams' most important guests, including King George V, stayed at Falaknuma, but after the death of the sixth Nizam here in 1911 (after a heavy bout of drinking), it as rarely used again. The palace is now being converted into a luxurious hotel.

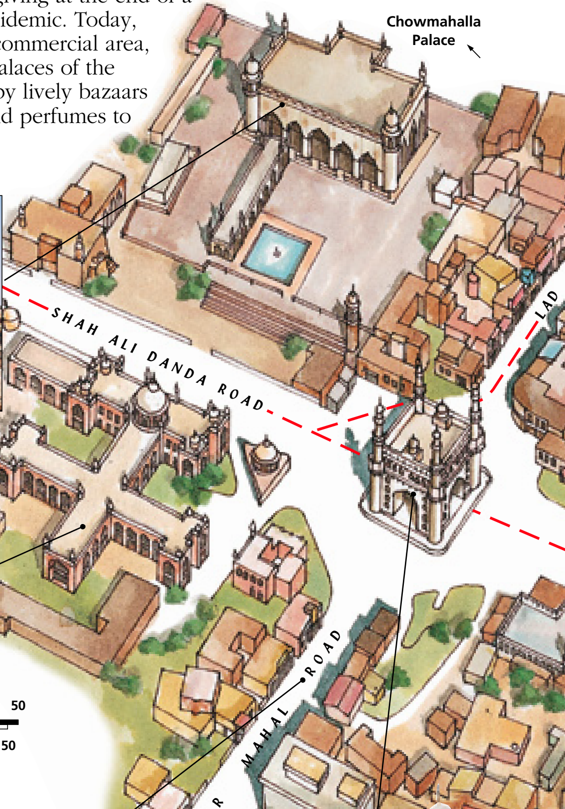

HYDERABAD CITY CENTRE
Badshahi Ashurkhana ④
Charminar ⑤
Mecca Masjid ⑥
Osmania General Hospital ③
Purani Haveli (Nizam's Museum) ①
Salarjung Museum ②
Hussain Sagar, State Archaeological Museum
Railway Station 1.5 km (1 mile)
Airport 10 km (6 miles)
The Residency, SECUNDERABAD
J. L. NEHRU ROAD
JHANSI ROAD
MAHARANI
ALAUDDIN ROAD
B REDDI RD
NH-9
Birla Archaeological Museum
Imlibun Bus Station
GOSHAMAHAL
MAULVI
SALAR JUNG ROAD
CITY COLLEGE ROAD
Osmania Hospital ③
AFZALGANJ ROAD
Golconda Fort
Naya Pul
Salarjung Museum ②
River Musi
High Court
RAZEN ROAD
BANGALORE
Badshahi Ashurkhana ④
MANDI ROAD
Purani Haveli (Nizam's Museum) ①
MAHBOOB SHAHI ROAD
PATTHERGATTI RD
PATTHERGATTI
LAD BAZAAR ROAD
Charminar ⑤
Mecca Masjid ⑥
Falaknuma Palace
MIR ALAM
0 metres 500
0 yards 500
KEY
Street-by-Street see pp662–3
Key to Symbols see back flap

Hyderabad Street-by-Street: Charminar

Detail from arch, Charminar

In the heart of the Old City, Charminar ("Four Towers") is Hyderabad's signature landmark. It was built in 1591 by King Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah of the Qutb Shahi dynasty *(see p666)* and, according to legend, marks the spot where he first saw his lover, the beautiful Hindu dancer Bhagmati. Another story says he built it as thanksgiving at the end of a deadly plague epidemic. Today, Charminar is the hub of a busy commercial area, where the grand mosques and palaces of the erstwhile rulers are surrounded by lively bazaars selling everything from pearls and perfumes to cabbages and computers.

Caps on sale on the pavement outside Mecca Masjid



Chowmahalla Palace ↖

★ Mecca Masjid

Built between 1617 and 1694, this huge mosque has bricks from Mecca embedded in its central arch. Several Nizams are buried here.

Unani Hospital was built by the last Nizam in the 1920s for the practice of traditional Graeco-Arab medicine.

0 metres 50

0 yards 50

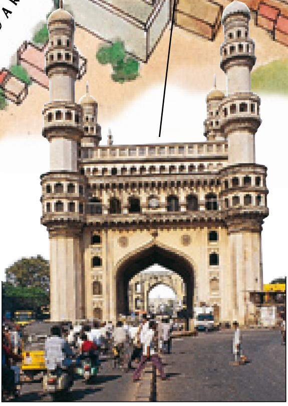
KEY

- - - - Suggested route

Silver-leaf is beaten into wafer-thin sheets in the shops in this street, and used to decorate sweets.

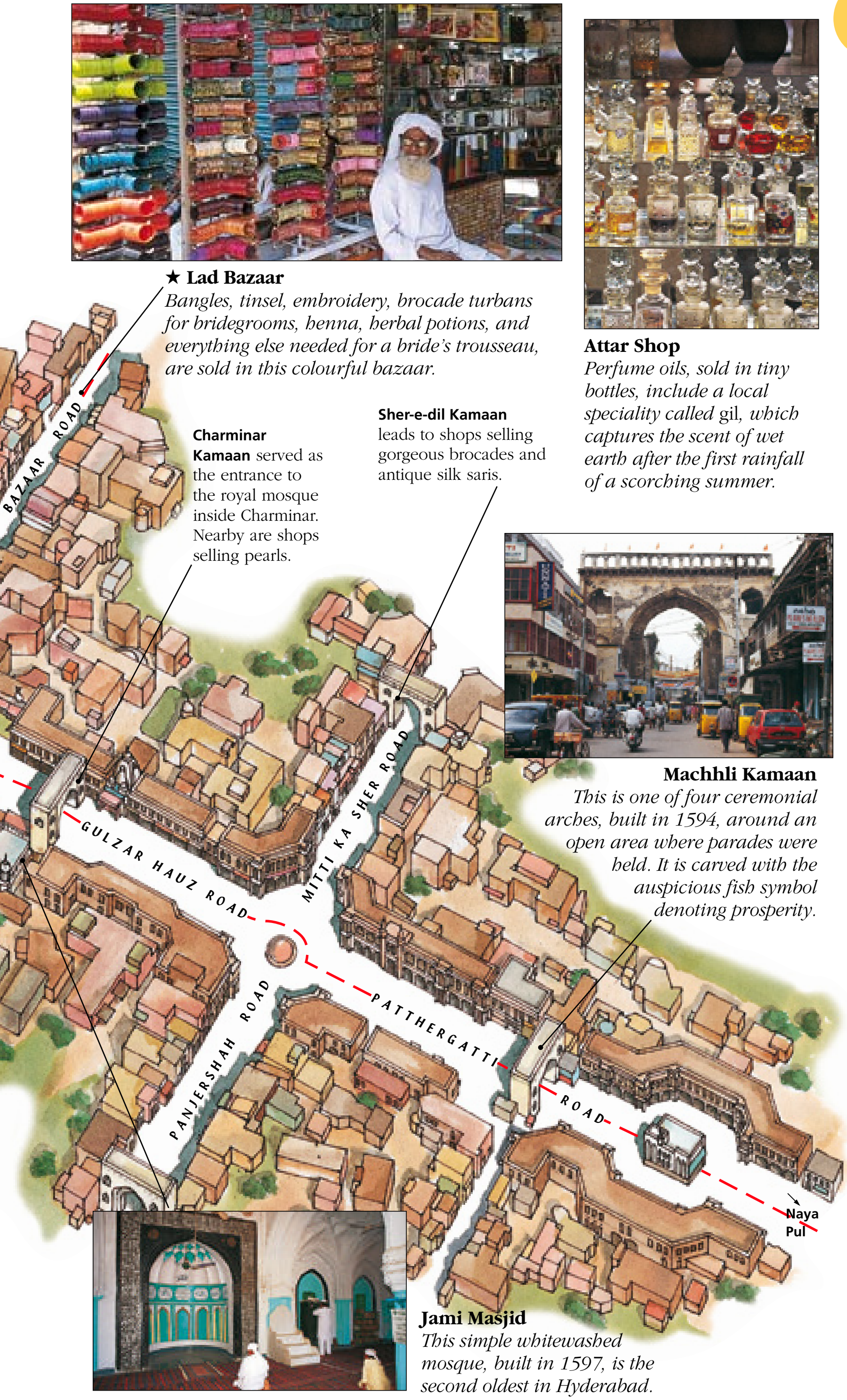
STAR SIGHTS

- ★ Mecca Masjid
- ★ Charminar
- ★ Lad Bazaar



★ Charminar

Grand arches frame Charminar's four sides. On the top floor is the city's oldest mosque. The minarets soar to 54 m (177 ft).


BAZAAR ROAD
GULZAR HAUZ ROAD
MITTI KA SHER ROAD
PANJERSHAH ROAD
PATTHERGATTI ROAD
Naya Pul

★ Lad Bazaar
Bangles, tinsel, embroidery, brocade turbans for bridegrooms, henna, herbal potions, and everything else needed for a bride's trousseau, are sold in this colourful bazaar.

Attar Shop
Perfume oils, sold in tiny bottles, include a local speciality called gil, which captures the scent of wet earth after the first rainfall of a scorching summer.

Charminar Kamaan served as the entrance to the royal mosque inside Charminar. Nearby are shops selling pearls.

Sher-e-dil Kamaan leads to shops selling gorgeous brocades and antique silk saris.

Machhli Kamaan
This is one of four ceremonial arches, built in 1594, around an open area where parades were held. It is carved with the auspicious fish symbol denoting prosperity.

Jami Masjid
This simple whitewashed mosque, built in 1597, is the second oldest in Hyderabad.

Exploring Hyderabad & Secunderabad

By the 19th century, Hyderabad had begun to expand beyond the crowded confines of the old quarter, clustered on both banks of the Musi river. New palaces, and the British military cantonment of Secunderabad, were now built on the city's outskirts.

Birla Archaeological Museum

Opposite Ravindra Bharathi, Saifabad.
Tel *(040) 2323 4336.* ○ *Mon–Sat.*
● *public hols.*

Located in the 19th-century hunting lodge of the sixth Nizam, Asmangarh Palace is the Birla Archaeological Museum. Its exhibits include sculptures and metal artifacts found at excavation sites in Andhra Pradesh, among them some beautiful bronzes of Shiva and Vishnu.

A short distance to the south is an obelisk which marks the Tomb of Michel Raymond. A French mercenary who fought in the Nizam's army from 1785 till his death in 1798, Raymond became a local hero, revered by both Muslims and Hindus.

The Residency

Koti. ○ *Mon–Sat.*

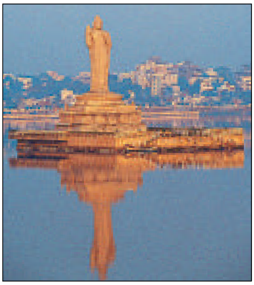
This elegant Palladian mansion, now the University College for Women, was built in 1805 by the third Nizam as a gift for the British Resident at his court, James Kirkpatrick. It was decorated in style, with a painted ceiling, and mirrors and chandeliers from Brighton Pavilion in England. The pediment above the portico still bears the East India Company's lion-and-unicorn coat of arms.

In the grounds is a small replica of the main building, which Kirkpatrick built for his aristocratic Hyderabadi wife, Khairunissa Begum – a liaison that created a great scandal at the time. There is a small British cemetery in a corner of the grounds.

State Archaeological Museum

Assembly Rd, N of Railway Station.
Tel *(040) 2323 2267.* ○ *Sat–Thu.*
● *Fri & public hols.*

Two large Norman-style gateways mark the entrance to the Nampally Public Gardens, which contain the State Archaeological Museum. It has a large collection of Buddhist art, some fine Chola bronzes, Roman coins, and even an Egyptian mummy. There are also replicas of murals and sculptures from the Ajanta and Ellora caves (see pp476–81) . Nearby is the **State Legislative Assembly** (built in 1913), a domed complex modelled on a Rajasthani palace.



Hussain Sagar, with a gigantic statue of the Buddha

Hussain Sagar

This huge lake, created in the 17th century, lies off Mahatma Gandhi Road, which bisects Hyderabad and Secunderabad. The 3-km (2-mile) stretch of road along its southern boundary is Hyderabad's most popular promenade; it is lined with statues of eminent figures from Andhra Pradesh's history. At the centre of the lake is a rock, on which stands a 17-m (56-ft) high monolithic statue of the Buddha, weighing 350 tonnes. Completed in 1986, it sank to the bottom of the lake when the ferry carrying it capsized. It was finally salvaged (intact) seven years later and installed on the rock in 1994.

Secunderabad

Northeast of Hussain Sagar along the Tank Bund Road, Secunderabad was established in 1806 as a cantonment to house British troops. It has since grown into a teeming city which is an extension of Hyderabad. At its centre is the **Parade Ground**, overlooked by **St Andrew's Church** and the imposing colonial-style **Secunderabad Club**. The Neo-Gothic **Holy Trinity Church** (built in 1848) is 6 km (4 miles) north of the Parade Ground, and has beautiful stained-glass windows, elegant steeples on its square tower and a British cemetery.

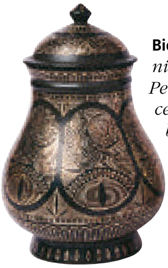
The walled compound of the **Paigah Palaces**, where the Hyderabadi aristocracy lived, is 2 km (1.3 miles) west of the Parade Ground, opposite Begumpet Airport. The most imposing palace is Vicar Manzil, built by the leading nobleman at the sixth Nizam's court, Sir Vicar-ul-Umra; he had built the magnificent Falaknuma Palace *(see p661)* for himself but had to move out when the Nizam decided to acquire it. At its entrance is the **Spanish Mosque** (built in 1906), with Moorish arches and octagonal spires.

The Spanish Mosque at the entrance of Vicar Manzil, Secunderabad

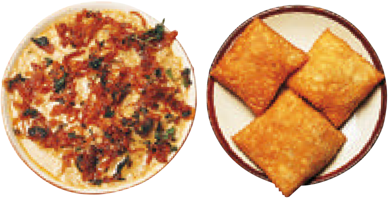
Hyderabadi Culture

Golden lunch box

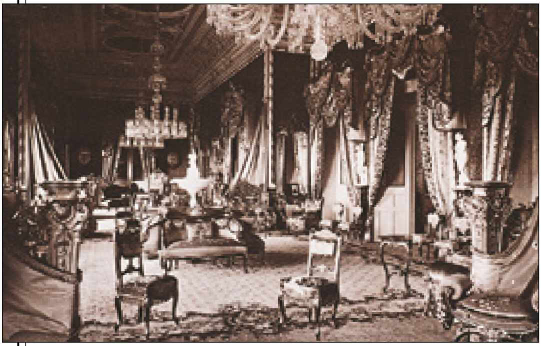
Sultan Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah, who founded Hyderabad in 1591, was an enlightened ruler, and a poet, scholar and patron of the arts. His kingdom was also a flourishing centre of trade, especially in pearls, diamonds and horses. At his court and in his bazaars, Hyderabadis rubbed shoulders with traders, scholars and artisans from different lands. This cosmopolitan tradition, and the culture of courtly elegance and etiquette, continued with the next dynasty – that of the Asaf Jahi Nizams, which ruled from 1724 until 1947. As a result, Hyderabad has a uniquely composite culture, a mélange of Hindu and Muslim customs, mingled with Arab, Persian and Turkish influences, evident in its language, food, manners and arts.



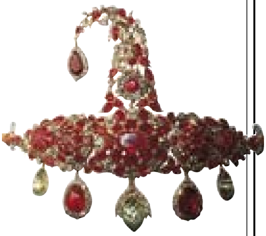
Bidriware *uses a technique introduced by Persians in the 16th century, by which black gunmetal is intricately inlaid with silver in floral and geometric patterns.*



Hyderabad's distinctive cuisine *includes dishes of Persian and Turkish origin such as* haleem *(minced meat cooked with wheat) and* lukmi *(puff pastry squares filled with meat).*

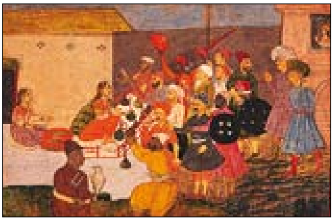


Falaknuma Palace, *photographed towards the end of the 19th century by the court photographer Lala Deen Dayal, captures the opulence of the Nizam of Hyderabad's lifestyle.*



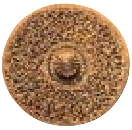
The Nizams' jewels *were legendary, and included fabulous pieces such as this 19th-century turban ornament, set with rubies from Burma and diamonds from their mines at Golconda* (see p666).

Muharram (see p669) *is observed by processions of Shia Muslims carrying decorated* tazias *through the city. Hyderabad's Shia population is mostly descended from Persians who settled here several generations ago.*



Golconda miniatures *often depict the city's sophisticated, cosmopolitan culture. This 18th-century painting shows merchants from many lands calling on a lady.*

Golconda ❷



Detail of a carving, Bala Hisar gate wall

Sprawling across a boulder-strewn plateau, Golconda ("Shepherd's Hill") Fort was the citadel of the Qutb Shahi dynasty, which ruled the Hyderabad region from 1507 to 1687. The earlier 12th-century mud fort that stood here was transformed between 1518 and 1580 into a splendid fortified city of grand palaces, mosques and gardens by successive Qutb Shahi rulers. Golconda Fort was also famous for its great hoard of diamonds, mined nearby, which included the celebrated Kohinoor diamond, now part of the British Crown jewels. The colossal ruins of Golconda cover an area of 40 sq km (15 sq miles).

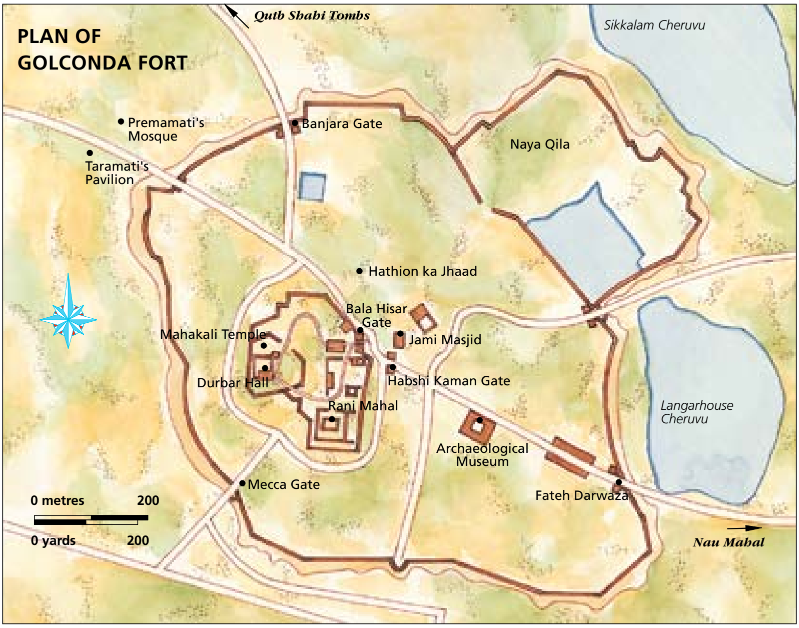
Bala Hisar Gate, entrance to the royal complex at Golconda Fort

Golconda Fort

This great fortress is protected by three formidable lines of defence. The first, an outer fortification made of enormous blocks of granite, encircles the citadel and its entire township. The middle wall surrounds the base of the hill, while the innermost one follows the contours of the highest ridge. Visitors enter through the **Fateh Darwaza** ("Victory Gate"), on the east side, which has a Hindu deity carved above its arch. Huge iron spikes are studded into the gate to prevent it from being stormed by elephant cavalries.

From the Fateh Darwaza, the road curves past the **Archaeological Museum** (the old Treasury), and through the bazaar, once a famous centre for cutting and polishing diamonds. Beyond are the two massive arches of the **Habshi Kaman Gate**, with rooms on top. These used to house a drummers' gallery and the sultans' Abyssinian guards. This gate leads to the middle fortification wall.

To its north is the austere, domed **Jami Masjid**, built in 1518 by Sultan Quli Qutb Shah, the founder of the dynasty; he was murdered here while at prayer by his son Jamshed in 1543. Beyond is the ceremonial arch, the **Bala Hisar Gate**, decorated with various Hindu motifs, including *yalis* (fantastic leonine beasts). This is the entrance to the inner citadel, known as the **Bala Hisar Complex**, where the royal palaces, assembly halls, workshops and an armoury are located. North of the Bala Hisar is a walled enclosure, begun in 1652, and planned as an extension to the inner fort. Within it is **Hathion ka Jhaad** ("Elephant Tree"), an extraordinary 700-year-old Baobab tree


PLAN OF GOLCONDA FORT
Qutb Shahi Tombs
Sikkalam Cheruvu
Premamati's Mosque
Taramati's Pavilion
Banjara Gate
Naya Qila
Hathion ka Jhaad
Bala Hisar Gate
Jami Masjid
Mahakali Temple
Durbar Hall
Habshi Kaman Gate
Rani Mahal
Archaeological Museum
Langarhouse Cheruvu
Mecca Gate
Fateh Darwaza
Nau Mahal
0 metres 200
0 yards 200

The royal bath near Rani Mahal, Golconda Fort

(Adansonia digitata), said to have been brought to Golconda by the sultans' Abyssinian guards.

The large-domed **Grand Portico** behind the Bala Hisar Gate is a good place to test the remarkable acoustics that were an important feature of the fort's defences. A soft handclap here can be heard in the king's chambers at the summit of the hill.

West of the Grand Portico are the ruins of the Qutb Shahi palaces. The most impressive of these is the **Rani Mahal**, a vaulted hall on a raised terrace, decorated with lovely floral arabesques. Hollows in these carvings were once inlaid with Golconda's famous diamonds and other precious stones. To the west of the Rani Mahal, a steep flight of 200 steps winds past royal baths, granaries, treasuries, water tanks and the remains of gardens, to the summit of the hill. Traces of the elaborate water supply system which carried water to the top of the citadel are visible along the route.

Just below the summit is a graceful mosque built by Sultan Ibrahim Qutb Shah, the third sultan, and the ancient Hindu **Mahakali Temple**, built into a cave.

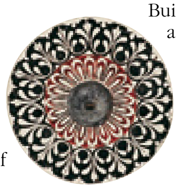
At the summit of the hill is the three-storeyed **Durbar Hall** ("Throne Room"), with a rooftop pavilion. From here there are wonderful views of the entire fort and its surroundings, which include two pretty structures on hillocks – **Taramati Baradari** and **Premamati's Mosque**. These are named after the two dancers who were royal favourites, and said to be so lightfooted that they could dance all the way from the pavilion to the Bala Hisar on a tightrope.

Standing outside the fort, east of the Fateh Darwaza, is the **Nau Mahal** ("Nine Palaces"), where the Nizams of Hyderabad held court whenever they came to Golconda.

Qutb Shahi Tombs

1 km (0.6 miles) NW of Golconda Fort.

This royal necropolis, where seven of the nine Qutb Shahi rulers are buried, is laid out in gardens with water channels, pools and tree-lined pathways. The tombs, built by each king in his lifetime, display a distinct and eclectic architectural style – they have large onion domes, Persian arches, Turkish columns and Hindu brackets and motifs.



Ceiling decoration, Bala Hisar Gate

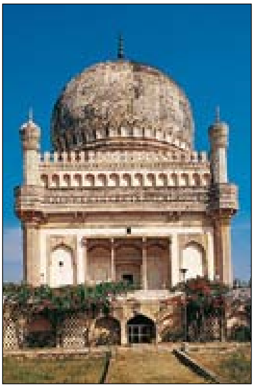
Built of grey granite and plaster, each tomb's dome is set on a petalled base, with a richly ornamented gallery and small minarets surrounding it.

The **Tomb of Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah**, the founder of the city of Hyderabad, is the most impressive. It is surrounded by a spacious terrace, where poetry and music festivals and Hyderabadi food festivals are occasionally held. Traces of brilliant turquoise and green enamelled tiles, which once covered the façades of all the tombs, still remain. Other remarkable monuments are the **Tomb of Queen Hayat Baksh Begum**, the wife of Mohammed Quli Qutb Shah, and the mosque behind it (both mid-17th century), decorated with exquisite floral designs and calligraphy.

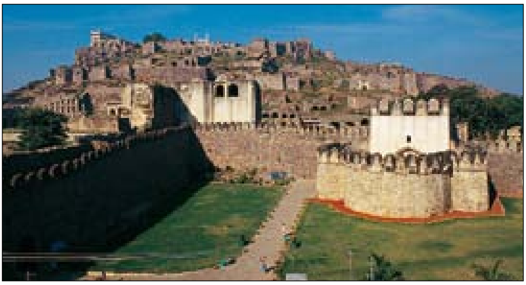
At the centre of the complex is the simple but beautifully proportioned **Royal Mortuary Bath**. The bodies of the deceased kings were ritually bathed before burial on the inlaid, 12-sided platform; the surrounding 12 water tanks symbolize the 12 Shia Imams.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Hyderabad district. 9 km (6 miles) W of Hyderabad. 🚌 ◯ *daily.* 🎟 📷 **Son et Lumière** *(English) Mar–Oct: 7pm daily; Nov–Feb: 6:30pm daily.* 📷 **Archaeological Museum** and **Qutb Shahi Tombs** ◯ *Sat–Thu.* 📷



The elegant tomb of Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah, Golconda



A panoramic view of Golconda Fort

Pochampalli ③

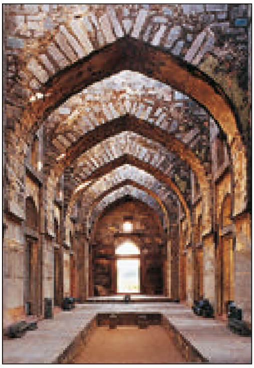
Nalgonda district. 50 km (31 miles) E of Hyderabad. 🚌 ⛱ *daily.*

Andhra Pradesh's ikat belt, where intricate tie-and-dye textiles *(see p317)* are woven, borders Hyderabad. Pochampalli, the name by which most of the state's ikat fabric is known, is the largest centre for this craft. The technique in its present form was first introduced in the 19th century in Chirala, in Guntur district, from where the fabric was exported to Africa.

Pochampalli's main street is lined with busy workshops where the various stages of production take place. Ikat weavers first tie the yarn according to the pattern and then dye them in great vats. A special oil-based technique is used to restrict the dye to those parts of the yarn that need to be coloured. The dyed yarn is then dried in the sun and finally woven on large hand-operated looms, to produce a cloth called *telia rumal (see p413)*. The state cooperative warehouses, as well as several shops, sell a wide range of beautiful silk saris and fabrics.

Environs

The neighbouring villages of and **Choutuppal** produce mainly cotton ikat fabrics. **Narayanpur**, another major weaving centre, is about 20 km (16 miles) further down the Vijaywada Highway.



Khush Mahal, the audience hall at Warangal Fort

Warangal ④

Warangal district. 140 km (87 miles) SW of Hyderabad. 🚆 🚌 ℹ *APTDC, Kazipet, (0870) 244 6606.*

A major *dhurrie*- weaving centre today, Warangal was described by the 13th-century Venetian traveller, Marco Polo, as one of the principal cities of South India. It was the capital of the Hindu Kakatiya kings, who dominated this region until the beginning of the 14th century.

An ancient fort at the edge of the modern town is all that remains of this once grand city. Built during the reign of the Kakatiya queen Rudramadevi (r.1262–89), its striking circular plan, with three concentric rings of walls, is still intact. The outer two rings, both of mud, define a circle 1.2 km (1 mile) in diameter. The innermost ring is made of stone, with four massive gateways at the cardinal points. At its geometric centre, four ornate *toranas* (gateways), marking the sacred precinct, are the only remains of a great Shiva temple that once stood here. The *toranas* themselves are remarkable for their size and beauty.

A short distance to the west is the **Khush Mahal**, an audience hall that was built by Muslim invaders in the 14th century. Massive angled walls with slit windows define a lofty interior with vaulted arches, though the roof is quite damaged. It is remarkably similar to the Hindola Mahal in Mandu *(see p247).*

Environs

Hanamkonda, the site of the first Kakatiya capital before it moved to Warangal, is 3 km (2 miles) northwest of Warangal. A magnificent thousand-pillared temple here, dedicated to Shiva, was erected in 1163 by Rudradeva (r.1158–95), the first great Kakatiya king.

This grey-green basalt temple, known as the *trikuta* or triple shrine, consists of a trio of shrines dedicated to Shiva, Vishnu and Surya. They are connected to a *mandapa,* now roofless, by a platform with a magnificently polished Nandi bull. The columns have sharply cut, lathe-turned shafts. A ceiling panel carved with an image of Nataraja *(see p566)* covers the central bay. The temple's gardens contain several small linga shrines, and an ancient well.

The magnificent thousand-pillared temple at Hanamkonda, near Warangal

The 13th-century Ramappa Temple at Palampet

Palampet ⑤

Palampet district. 70 km (44 miles) SW of Hyderabad. 🚌

This village is dominated by the **Ramappa Temple**, the best preserved example of Kakatiya architecture. Dedicated to Shiva, it was built in 1234 by Recherla Rudra, a general of the ruler Ganapatideva (r.1199–1262). Like the temple at Hanamkonda, it too has a spacious *mandapa* with beautifully sculpted black basalt columns. This *mandapa*, cruciform in plan, also has porches with balcony seats on three sides. The eaves sheltering the peripheral columns are supported by angled struts, many of which are fashioned as three-dimensional maidens with graceful bodies in dancing poses. Other similar but smaller relief figures, as well as scenes from the epics, are seen in the central ceiling panel within the *mandapa*.

The exterior of the sanctuary, in contrast, is devoid of any carvings. The restrained ornamentation and simple modelling are typical of the elegance of Kakatiya art. A stone pavilion sheltering a Nandi, smaller in size than the one at Hanamkonda, but as exquisitely carved, stands in front of the temple.

South of the Ramappa Temple is **Ramappa Cheruvu**, a vast artificial lake created by Recherla Rudra, and surrounded by picturesque hills.

Carving, Ghanpur

Environs

More Kakatiya temples can be seen at **Ghanpur**, a little village 13 km (8 miles) northwest of Palampet. The largest consists of a pair of Shiva shrines, both with *mandapas* and balcony seats. The main shrine has delightful female *dvarapalas* (doorkeepers), dancing maidens and finely carved brackets. Other minor shrines dot the walled compound.

TRADITIONAL ANDHRA DHURRIES

Although lustrous silk and wool carpets from Persia and Turkey embellished the palaces of the Nizams of Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh has long had a local tradition of carpet weaving in Warangal and Eluru. Commonly known as *dhurries*, the rugs are made in both cotton and wool, in a variety of designs and colours. The cotton *dhurries* from Warangal are usually woven into geometric patterns, while the woollen carpets of Eluru (314 km/195 miles southeast of Warangal) sport floral designs that hint at a Western influence. The more expensive *shatranjis* (a chessboard-like pattern) are made with heavy cotton thread and produced on horizontal looms. The *kalamkari* craftsmen of Sri Kalahasti *(see p680)* make rugs in traditional designs on a jute base, using vegetable dyes.

A *dhurrie* with geometric patterns

FESTIVALS OF ANDHRA PRADESH

Ugadi *(Mar)*. Homes are spring-cleaned throughout the state and special food is prepared to celebrate the Telugu New Year.

Mrigasira *(Jun)*, Hyderabad. On this day a unique cure for asthma is administered to patients from all over India, who swallow live a small, freshwater fish called *maral*. Many sufferers claim miraculous cures.

Batkamma Festival, Warangal

Batkamma *(Sep/Oct)*, Warangal. This festival in honour of the goddess of wealth, Lakshmi, begins just before Dussehra and continues for nine days. Flowers are arranged over a turmeric representation of the goddess and carried on a bamboo tray to a lake or river, where the women dance in a circle around the floral offering before immersing it in the water.

Festival of Andhra Pradesh *(Nov)*, Hyderabad. This ten-day cultural festival marks the anniversary of Andhra Pradesh's statehood. The state's best musicians and dancers perform.

Muharram *(Feb/Mar)*, Hyderabad. The Shia Muslim community commemorates the martyrdom of the Prophet's grandson, Hussain, at the battle of Karbala, with 40 days of mourning. On the final day, gem-studded *alams* and colourful *tazias* (replicas of his tomb) are carried in procession through the Old City.

A view of the Visakhapatnam harbour on the Bay of Bengal

Visakhapatnam ❻

Visakhapatnam district. 350 km (218 miles) N of Vijayawada. *969,600.* ✈ *12 km (7 miles) W of town centre, then bus or taxi.* 🚆 🚌 i *APTDC, RTC Complex, (0891) 278 8820.* *daily.*

The second busiest port in India after Mumbai, Visakhapatnam, also known as Vizag, is rapidly becoming the largest shipyard in the country. It is an important industrial town and naval base as well. The town makes a convenient point from which to visit some of the beautiful beaches along the Bay of Bengal and the many picturesque temple towns of the northern coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh.

Named after Visakha, the Hindu God of Valour, Visakhapatnam was once part of the Mauryan emperor Ashoka's vast empire *(see p42)*. Later, it was ruled by the Andhra kings of Vengi, and other South Indian dynasties, including the Pallavas, Cholas and Gangas. In the 15th century, it became part of the Vijayanagar Empire *(see pp530–31)*. It finally came into British hands in the 17th century, after which it was developed into a major port.

Looming above the port is a hilly ridge with three crests, each with a religious shrine. On the southernmost one, **Venkateshvara Konda**, is a temple dedicated to Balaji (Krishna); in the middle is **Ross Hill**, with a mid-19th-century church; the third, **Dargah Konda**, has a shrine dedicated to a Muslim saint, Ishaque Madina.

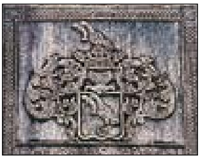
Along the southern coastline is **Dolphin's Nose**, a 358-m (1,175-ft) long rocky outcrop that rises 175 m (574 ft) above the sea. On it stands a lighthouse with a beam that can be seen 64 km (40 miles) out at sea. Vestiges of the city's colonial past are visible here in an old Protestant church, a fort, barracks and an arsenal, all dating to the 18th century.

Idyllic beaches, set on the fringes of the Eastern Ghats and bounded by forested hills and rocky cliffs, include the **Ramakrishna Mission Beach**, now being developed as a tourist resort by Andhra Pradesh Tourism, **Rishikonda Beach** and **Lawson's Bay**.

Towards the north of the town, beyond Lawson's Bay, is **Kailasagiri**, a forested hill which has several lookout points for a panoramic view of the city and harbour. The twin town of **Waltair**, once a health resort for British officers, is north of the bay. Andhra University, one of the largest campuses in the state, is also situated here, along with a number of pretty 19th-century churches.

Environs

Simhachalam, the "Lion's Hill" Temple, dedicated to Lord Varaha Narasimha, an incarnation of Vishnu *(see p679)*, stands at the summit of the thickly forested Ratnagiri Hill, 16 km (10 miles) northwest of Visakhapatnam. A flight of steps leads to the northern gateway, an elaborately decorated *gopura* that is the main entrance to the temple. Inside the compound is a tall *dvajasthambha* (flagpole). Similar in style to Konark's Sun Temple *(see pp310–11)*, the temple was constructed in the 9th or 10th century, and was extensively rebuilt during the 13th century. It is believed that the presiding deity was originally Shiva, but he was replaced by this incarnation of Vishnu after the reformer-saint, Ramanuja *(see p522)*, visited the site in the 11th century.



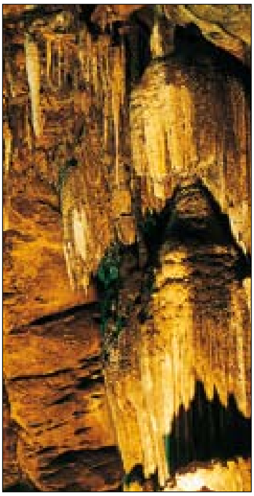
Dutch heraldry, Bheemunipatnam

Bheemunipatnam is a 24-km (15-mile) drive north from Visakhapatnam, along one of the longest stretches of beach road in the country. This quiet fishing village, situated at the mouth of the Gosthani river, was a Dutch settlement in the early 17th century.

Obelisk-shaped Dutch tombs at Bheemunipatnam

For hotels and restaurants in this region see p717 and p743

Bimlipatam, as it was then known (locally referred to as Bhimli), was the site of Maratha attacks and Anglo-Dutch wars throughout the 17th and 18th centuries. Its Dutch legacy can be seen in some of the old colonnaded houses, the ruined fort, and the Dutch cemetery, which has unusual, obelisk-shaped tombstones.


A fascinating stalactite formation inside the Borra Caves

Borra Caves ❼

Visakhapatnam district. 100 km (62 miles) N of Visakhapatnam. 🚌
○ *daily.* 📷

Close to the northern border of Visakhapatnam district are these magnificent limestone caves, discovered in 1807 by William King of the the Geological Survey of India. The extensive underground chambers, lined by stalactites and stalagmites, are now being developed by the state tourism department as a major attraction for visitors. Some smaller stalagmites are worshipped as lingas, with Nandi bulls placed in front of them. The local people believe that the water trickling from the roof of the caves is from a mountain spring which is the source of the Gosthani river.

Environs

About 22 km (14 miles) northeast of Borra is the **Araku Valley**, home of several tribal communities, the state's original inhabitants. The road to Araku goes past forests and coffee plantations, and the valley, with its woods, waterfalls and bracing climate, offers pleasant walks.

Tribal women from Araku Valley

Ramatirtham ❽

Visakhapatnam district. 72 km (45 miles) NE of Visakhapatnam. 🚌

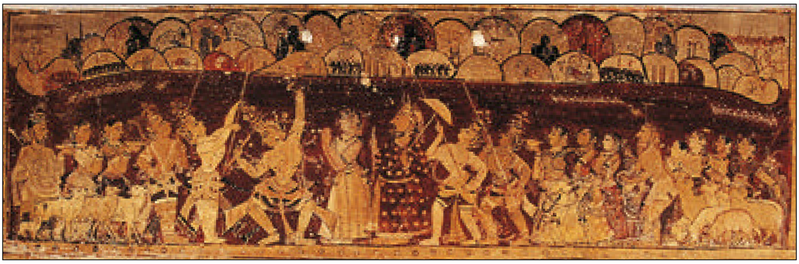
Ruins from the Ikshvaku period (3rd to 4th centuries AD), when Buddhism flourished in this area, can be seen at Ramatirtham. Just outside the village is a group of structures on a hill known as Gurubhaktakonda ("Hill of the Devoted Disciple"). On a narrow rocky ledge about 165 m (541 ft) above the surrounding plains are the ruins of a stupa, monasteries, and prayer halls enclosing smaller stupas. Close by, on another hill called Durgakonda, is a similar set of ruins, along with carvings of Jain *tirthankaras* *(see p396)* that date from the 8th and 9th centuries.

Srikakulam District ❾

108 km (67 miles) N from Visakhapatnam to Srikakulam. 🚌

The headquarters of Andhra Pradesh's northernmost district, Srikakulam is located on the banks of the Swarnamukhi river. On the outskirts of the town, at **Arasavalli**, is a sun temple, ingeniously constructed at such an angle that the sun's rays fall directly on the deity's feet twice a year. The **Srikurmanatha Temple** at Srikurman, 13 km (8 miles) east of Srikakulam, is dedicated to Kurma, the tortoise incarnation of Vishnu. It was built by the Chalukya kings in the 10th century but was substantially rebuilt by the Cholas in the 12th and 13th centuries. The colonnade around the main shrine has 19th century murals of Krishna and Vishnu.

Mukhalingam, 46 km (29 miles) north of Srikakulam, was the first capital of the Eastern Ganga kings, before they moved to Orissa *(see p44)*. The temples here date to their reign, between the 9th and 13th centuries. The best preserved is the 9th-century Madhukeshvara Temple, with magnificent sculptures of Shiva and friezes of scenes from the Krishna legend. The 10th-century Someshvara Temple, at the entrance to the town, has beautiful statues of river goddesses and other deities, flanking the main doorway.


Mural showing Krishna surrounded by *gopis*, at Srikurmanatha Temple in Srikakulam district

Ripening fields of paddy with the Eastern Ghats in the background, near Rajahmundry

East Godavari District ⑩

380 km (236 miles) E from Hyderabad to Rajahmundry. 🚆 *Rajahmundry.* 🚌

The Godavari, one of South India's most sacred rivers, swells to a wide torrent (at places 6 km/4 miles across), just north of **Rajahmundry** town. Lush paddy fields and sugarcane plantations characterize the countryside.

Rajahmundry, the largest town in East Godavari district, is best known for the many Chalukya temples in its vicinity, and for the 2,743-m (8,999 -ft) long bridge that spans the river. The lookout points on **Dowleshvaram Dam** (built 1848–52), 10 km (6 miles) downstream, offer spectacular views of the river. Every 12 years, the Dakshina Pushkaram festival – the Kumbh Mela *(see p211)* of the South – takes place here.

Peddapuram, famous for its fine handwoven silk and cotton, is 30 km (19 miles) northeast of Rajahmundry, on the road to Visakhapatnam.

Annavaram, 70 km (44 miles) to the northeast of Rajahmundry, is the site of the Satyanarayana Temple, on Ratnagiri Hill, renowned for its 4-m (13 ft)-high statue of the Hindu Trinity, and its ancient sundial.

The **Godavari Gorge** begins 80 km (50 miles) north of Rajahmundry. A drive or boat ride along the Gorge, which cuts through the hilly Eastern Ghats, offers views of spectacular scenery, with a series of beautiful lakes that many visitors have found reminiscent of Italy and Scotland.

Ryali, 24 km (15 miles) south of Rajahmundry, has a Chalukya temple dedicated to Vishnu. It houses a stone image of the Goddess Ganga *(see p163)*, from which flows a continuous trickle of water.

Draksharamam, 40 km (25 miles) southeast of Rajahmundry, is famed for its 10th-century Bhimesvara Temple, which combines the Chalukya and Chola styles of architecture, and houses a 5-m (16-ft) high linga. The Godavari is said to have been split into seven streams by the Saptarishis (seven great sages) of Hindu mythology and three of these streams are believed to have gone underground here. Close to the town is an old Dutch cemetery, locally known as Ollandu Dibba ("Holland Mound"), with gravestones dated between 1675 and 1728, some with very elaborate designs.

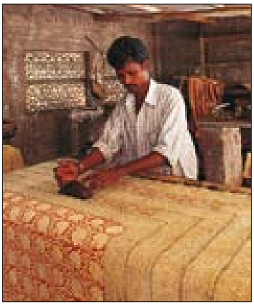
Antarvedi, on the banks of the Vashishta river, a branch of the Godavari, is 112 km (70 miles) south of Rajahmundry. It is best reached by boat from Narsapur on the south bank. The Lakshminarayana Temple (built in 1823), with its brightly painted tower stands on the river bank, and is usually thronged with pilgrims who come for a dip in the holy river.

Machilipatnam ⑪

Krishna district. 340 km (211 miles) E of Hyderabad. 🚆 🚌 🧺 *daily.*

One of the first European settlements on India's eastern coast, Machilipatnam ("City of Fish") was a thriving port and textile centre in the 17th and 18th centuries. It was also the headquarters of the English East India Company on the Coromandel Coast. The French and the Dutch briefly established themselves here as well. The Dutch cemetery, with its ornate tombstones, are all that remain from that period.

Machilipatnam was hit by a giant tidal wave in 1864, which drowned more than 30,000 people. It was caused by a volcanic eruption at Mount Krakatoa, 5,000 km (3,107 miles) away. After that it lost its importance as a port, but it remains famous for its *kalamkari* textiles *(see p680).*



A *kalamkari* blockprinter at work in Machilipatnam

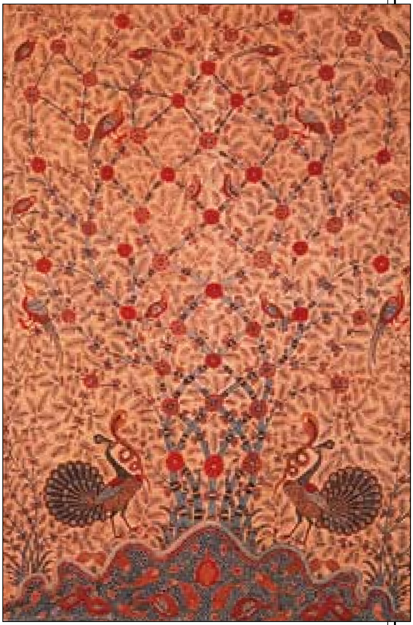
Trade Textiles: Tree of Life

Between the 17th and 18th centuries, the Coromandel Coast, with Machilipatnam as its trade centre and port, was one of the main producers and exporters of cotton textiles to Western Europe. At first just items of barter, they soon became fashionable in Europe, increasing the demand for the region's dye-painted cotton *kalamkari (see p680)* fabric, known in Europe as chintz. Special designs were commissioned, among them the Tree of Life, which absorbed techniques and aesthetics from India, Persia, China and Europe. Valued for their richness of colour and design, they were widely used as hangings and spreads in European homes.

Detail of flowers and foliage

TREE OF LIFE

The Tree of Life was a very popular motif in textiles from the Coromandel Coast. Based on ancient nature myths that deified plants and trees, and inspired largely by Persian miniatures, its central flowering tree, rising from a rocky mound, linked earth to heaven and symbolized creation.



Birds, *real and mythical, inhabit the thickly foliated upper branches of the tree. Standing on the mound are two stylized peacocks holding snakes in their beaks.*

Aquatic creatures, *such as fish and tortoise, are depicted to show marine life in the holy waters below the Sacred Mound. Shades of indigo have been used to create the effect of rippling waves and flowing water.*

A bamboo thicket, *composed as a single Tree of Life, rises from the Sacred Mound. The painted and printed flowers and feathery leaves suggest nature's exuberance.*

A view of the Prakasam Barrage, built over the Krishna river at Vijayawada

Vijayawada ⑫

Krishna district. 267 km (166 miles) SE of Hyderabad. *825,400.* i *APTDC, (0866) 257 1393.* *daily.*

The third largest city in the state, Vijayawada is a busy commercial town with one of the largest railway junctions in the country. In a picturesque spot on the northern bank of the Krishna river, it is bounded on three sides by the Indrakiladri Hills. The area around the river banks is a pleasant contrast to the noisy, crowded town.

Within the city limits, on a low hill to the east, is the **Kanakadurga Temple**, dedicated to the goddess Lakshmi. The **Victoria Jubilee Museum**, on Bunder Road, houses a fine collection of Buddhist and Hindu relics from the 2nd and 3rd centuries. Especially impressive are the white limestone Standing Buddha from the nearby Buddhist site of Alluru (3rd or 4th century), and the powerful depiction of Durga slaying the buffalo demon Mahisa (2nd century).

On the outskirts of town is the 1-km (0.6-mile) long **Prakasam Barrage**, first built in 1855 and extensively reconstructed in 1955. It irrigates nearly 1.2 million ha (3 million acres) of land, turning the Krishna Delta into the richest granary in Andhra Pradesh. **Bhavani Island**, a scenic picnic spot, is just upstream, reached by launch from the river bank.

Victoria Jubilee Museum
Sat-Thu. *extra charges.*

Environs

Mogalrajapuram, 3 km (2 miles) east of Vijayawada, and **Undavalli**, 4 km (2.5 miles) to the south, on the other side of the river, are famous for their rock-cut temples (5th–7th centuries).

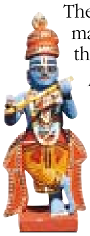
Mangalgiri, 12 km (7 miles) south of Vijayawada, is a textile village, specializing in fine cotton saris and striped and checked fabrics. It also has the impressive 14th-century Lakshmi Narasimha Temple complex, with a small Garuda shrine in front of it.

Kondapalli ⑬

Krishna district. 14 km (9 miles) W of Vijayawada.

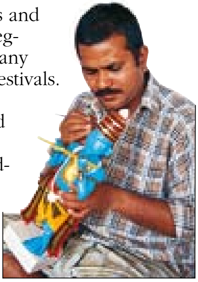
This pretty village, famous for its painted wooden toys, is dominated by the 8th-century Hill Fort built by the Eastern Chalukya dynasty. Encircled by ramparts and towers, the fort was an important stronghold in the Krishna Valley under the Qutb Shahis of Hyderabad *(see p666)*, in the 16th century. At the crest of the hill, a steep climb up, is the ruined Tanisha Mahal palace. The path descends past a deep tank, the granary and the armoury, to the Golconda Gate, which faces northwest towards Hyderabad.

KONDAPALLI TOYS



Lord Krishna

The craft of toy-making has been passed down for many generations in Kondapalli. In the hands of the deft artisans, the light yet strong and flexible *poniki* wood is fashioned into distinctive figures of gods and goddesses, fruits and vegetables, which adorn many Andhra homes during festivals. Each part of the toy is whittled into shape, and then glued together using a special tamarind-seed glue. The piece is then covered with lime glue, which gives it a smooth finish. It is allowed to dry before being brightly painted in vivid blues, greens, reds and yellows, with touches of black.



A toy being painted in bright colours

The Maha Chaitya at Amravati, now only a low earthen mound

Amravati ⓮

Guntur district. 30 km (19 miles) W of Vijayawada. 🚌 *from Guntur.* ⛴ *from Hotel Krishnaveni, Vijayawada.* *run by AP Tourism, Vijayawada.* ℹ *Haritha Hotel, (08645) 255 332.*

Renowned for its **Maha Chaitya**, or "Great Stupa", Amravati was once the most impressive of the many Buddhist religious settlements along the Krishna Valley. Today, nothing remains of this stupa except a low earthen mound, but in its day it was reputed to be the largest and most elaborate stupa in South India. It was built by the Satavahanas, the great Andhra dynasty, in the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC *(see p43)*.

The Maha Chaitya was enlarged several times by the Ikshvaku kings, who succeeded the Satavahanas, reaching its final form between the 3rd and 4th centuries AD. Clad in the local white limestone, the Maha Chaitya was an earthen hemispherical mound about 45 m (148 ft) in diameter and more than 30 m (98 ft) in height, including its supporting drum and capping finial. It was surrounded by a 6-m (20-ft) high railing with posts and cross pieces, and lofty entrance gateways at the cardinal points, all exuberantly carved.

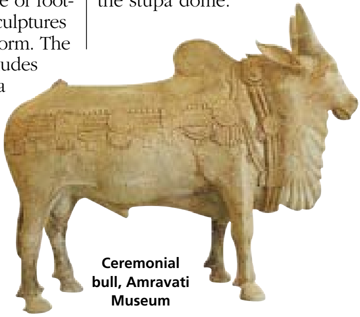
In the 5th century, when South India saw a revival of Hinduism, the stupa was abandoned, and remained so until a British official, Colonel Colin Mackenzie, began excavating the site in 1796. Unfortunately, by the time a thorough investigation of the ruins began in the mid-19th century, most of the limestone portions had been pillaged, many fine pieces having been shipped to Britain.

Nevertheless, a great deal of fine sculpture remains at the site, and is on display at the **Archaeological Museum**, next to the Maha Chaitya. Unlike the stupa at Sanchi *(see pp244–5)*, where the Buddha is represented through symbols such as the Bodhi Tree or footprints, the Amravati sculptures show him in human form. The museum's display includes large Standing Buddha images, some more than 2 m (7 ft) high, whose natural poses and elegantly fluted robes suggest the influence of late Roman classical art. The second gallery has a remarkable life-sized ceremonial bull, reconstructed from fragments discovered in 1980. A part of the stupa's railing, decorated with scenes from the Buddha's life, is reconstructed in the courtyard. Other exhibits include an instructive model of the original monument and superb sculptures of the Bodhi Tree, under which the Buddha is said to have meditated.

🏛 **Archaeological Museum**
○ *Sat-Thu.* 📷 *extra charges.*

Environs

Overlooking the Krishna river, just north of the museum, is the **Amareshvara Temple**. Built during the 10th and 11th centuries, it was renovated in the 18th century by a local chief whose statue stands in the outer hall. The sanctuary and the open-columned hall are in a walled compound. A basement, reached by a flight of stairs, is believed to conceal the remains of a stupa, suggested by the pillar-shaped linga in the sanctuary, which was probably part of the stupa dome.


Ceremonial bull, Amravati Museum

Amravati limestone carving with a scene from the Jataka Tales

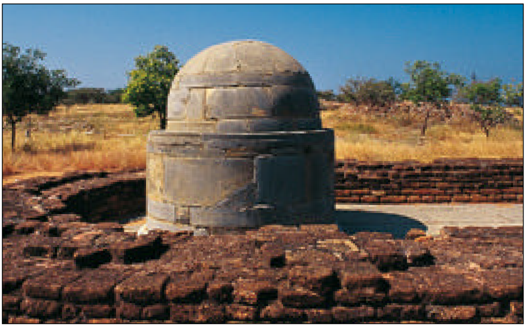
THE AMRAVATI SCULPTURES

The surviving limestone carvings from the Maha Chaitya are now divided between the Archaeological Museum at Amravati, the Government Museum in Chennai *(see p565)* and the British Museum in London. These reliefs testify to the vitality of early Buddhist art traditions in South India. Posts and railings show ornate lotus medallions, friezes of garlands carried by dwarfs, and Jataka Tales *(see p480)* illustrated with vivid scenes of crowds, horse riders and courtiers. Drum panels are adorned with pots filled with lotuses, model stupas with serpents wrapped around the drums, and flying celestials above the umbrella-like finials.

Limestone carving, Amravati Museum

Nagarjunakonda ⑮

Guntur district. 175 km (109 miles) W of Vijayawada. 🚉 *Macherla, 22 km (14 miles) SE of site, then bus to Vijayapuri.* 🚌 ⛴ *daily from Vijayapuri, except Fri.* ℹ *Vijay Vihar, (08680) 277 362.* ✍ *from Hyderabad.*


View of the hemispherical stupa, Bodhishri Chaitya, Nagarjunakonda

Nagarjunakonda or "Nagarjuna's Hill", on the banks of the Krishna river, was named after Nagarjuna Acharya, the 2nd-century Buddhist theologian and founder of an influential school of philosophy. Once a sophisticated Buddhist settlement, with large monasteries and stupas, wide roads and public baths, it was established in the 3rd and 4th centuries, when the area flourished under the rule of the powerful Ikshvaku kings.

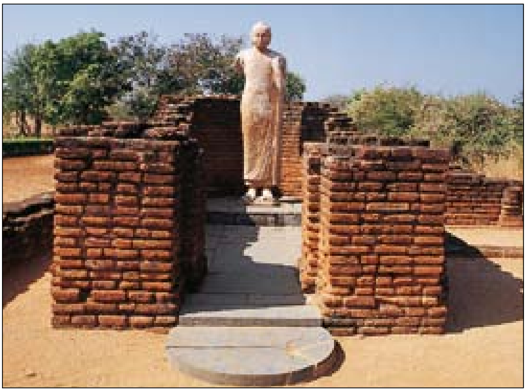
Thereafter, Nagarjunakonda was ruled by a succession of dynasties, culminating with the Vijayanagar rulers, who built a fort around the Buddhist ruins. When the Vijayanagar Empire declined, the area was abandoned. It was rediscovered only between 1954 and 1961.

In the early 1960s, when the huge Nagarjuna Sagar Dam was being constructed across the Krishna, a number of these rediscovered ancient Buddhist settlements were threatened with submersion. However, the Archaeological Survey of India salvaged and reconstructed many of them, brick by brick, on top of the hill where the citadel once used to stand.

Today, most of the hill, and the secluded valley in which these settlements once stood, have been submerged by the waters of the Nagarjuna Sagar lake. Only the top of the hill, where the rescued remains have been reassembled, juts out like an island. The island is accessible by launches, which leave regularly from the small village of Vijayapuri, on the banks of the lake.

On the island, the path from the jetty leads first to the **Simha Vihara 4**. This comprises a stupa built on a high platform with a pair of *chaitya grihas* (prayer halls) adjoining it. While one of the *chaitya grihas* houses a second stupa, the other enshrines a monumental sculpture of the Standing Buddha. The **Bodhishri Chaitya**, opposite it, has a raised stupa contained within a semi-circular-ended brick structure. To its west is the **Maha Chaitya** stupa which, with a diameter of 27.5 m (90 ft), was one of the largest at Nagarjunakonda. Its internal rubble walls radiate outwards like the spokes of a wheel, and are filled with earth. Just ahead of it is the **Swastika Chaitya**, named after the Indian swastika emblem formed by its rubble walls.

Detail of a carving, Nagarjunakonda


A giant-sized statue of the Standing Buddha in Nagarjunakonda

Near the citadel walls is a stone megalith, some 2,000 years old. It conceals a simple burial chamber that once contained four skulls. To its east is the **Archaeological Museum**, which houses superb Buddhist sculptures from the ruins of Nagarjunakonda. They include limestone reliefs and panels carved with seated Buddhas, flying celestial beings and miniature replicas of stupas. Friezes from the railings which surrounded the stupas depict scenes from the Buddha's life. Among the free-standing sculptures are dignified Buddha figures dressed in elegant robes.

🏛 **Archaeological Museum**
○ *Sat-Thu.* 📷 ✍

Environs

More structures from the Ikshvaku period are reassembled at a site 15 km (9 miles) south of Vijayapuri. These include a Stadium, with tiered galleries around a central court, possibly used for musical and theatrical performances and sporting events. The adjacent Monastic Complex has shrines and *chaitya grihas* as well as a refectory, store and baths.

For hotels and restaurants in this region see p717 and p743

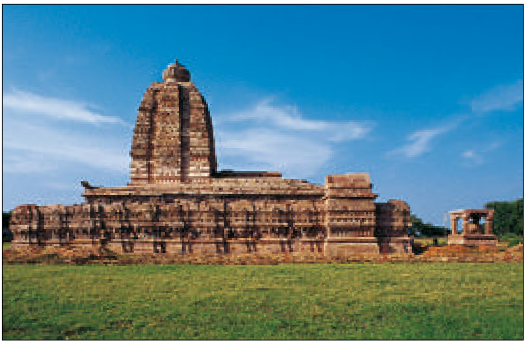
Srisailam & Krishna Gorge ⑯

Kurnool district. 225 km (140 miles) S of Hyderabad. 🚌 *daily from Hyderabad.* ℹ *Haritha Hotel, APTDC, (08524) 287 411; Punnami Hotel, Srisailam, (08524) 288 311.* 🎉 *Shivaratri (Feb/Mar).*

The pretty temple town of Srisailam, situated in the thickly wooded Nallamalai Hills, overlooking the deep Krishna Gorge, is a popular pilgrimage spot. Dominating the town is the **Mallikarjunaswamy Temple**, whose white tiered *gopuras*, standing atop fortress-like walls, are visible from a great distance. The temple, which houses one of the 12 *jyotirlingas* (naturally formed lingas said to contain the light of Shiva), is believed to date to pre-Vedic times, though the present structure was built in the 15th century. The carvings on the walls represent Shiva in his many forms. A pillared hallway leads to the inner shrine, guarded by a monolithic Nandi bull.

Further up the hill is the **Hatakesvaram Temple**, said to be the spot where the philosopher-saint Shankaracharya *(see p648)* wrote one of his celebrated treatises. A small Shiva temple at the summit, **Sikharam**, offers breathtaking views of the valley.

The dammed waters of the Krishna power a huge hydroelectric project at Srisailam. When the waters are high enough, a luxury launch, the *Zaria*, ferries visitors from the reservoir at Nagarjuna Sagar to Srisailam Dam. For almost half the distance between the reservoir and Srisailam Dam, the river passes through a thick forest reserve, habitat of the tiger, panther and hyena. The river, which runs very deep at Srisailam, is known here as the Patal Ganga ("Underground Ganges") – according to legend, it springs from an underground tributary of the Ganges. On the ghats close to the dam, boatmen offer enchanting rides on their basin-shaped reed and bamboo boats.



The Sangameshvara Temple outside Alampur village

Alampur ⑰

Mahboobnagar district. 200 km (124 miles) S of Hyderabad. 🚆 🚌

This village, on the northern bank of the Tungabhadra river, is the site of the earliest Hindu temples in Andhra Pradesh. Constructed by the Chalukyas of Badami *(see pp536–7)* in the 7th and 8th centuries, the nine red sandstone shrines are collectively known as the **Nava Brahma Temples**, and are dedicated to Shiva. The layout conforms to a standard scheme – each temple faces east, has an inner sanctum, a pillared *mandapa,* and is surrounded by a passage. The tower over the inner sanctum, capped by an *amalaka* (circular ribbed stone), shows the distinct influence of North Indian temple architecture *(see p20).*

Detail from the Padma Brahma Temple

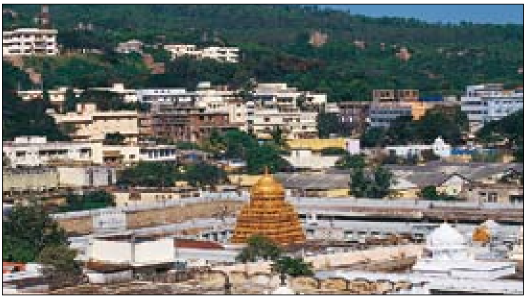
The later temples in the group have porches with perforated stone screens on three sides of the passageways, as in the **Svarga Brahma Temple**, built in AD 689. This beautiful temple has outstanding sculptures, including a complete set of *dikpalas* (guardian figures) in the corner niches, and icons of Shiva in various forms. Some columns in the interior have been elaborately carved, such as those in the **Padma Brahma Temple**. The pillars here have seated lions at the base, fluted shafts and ribbed pot-shaped capitals.

Naga (Snake deity) from the Archaeological Museum, Alampur

The **Bala Brahma Temple** is the only one of the group, still in use. The **Archaeological Museum**, next to the complex, has a fine collection of early Chalukya sculptures. Just outside the village is the reconstructed **Sangameshvara Temple**, removed from a site that was submerged by the damming of the Krishna, 15 km (9 miles) to the north. Standing on a high terrace, it is similar to the Nava Brahma group, except that the sculptural details have eroded.

Just southwest of the Nava Brahma Temple complex are the **Papanashanam Temples** (9th–10th centuries). These temples have imposing multi-tiered pyramidal roofs but little external decoration, though the interior columns are ornately carved. One of the temples has a fine ceiling panel of Vishnu's incarnations *(see p679)*, and another has a powerful image of Durga.

🏛 **Archaeological Museum**
○ *Sat-Thu.* ✋

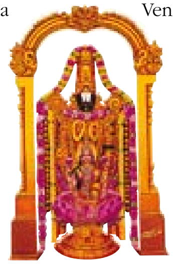


View of Tirupati, with the gold-gilded *vimana* of the temple

Tirupati ⑱

Chittoor district. 585 km (364 miles) S of Hyderabad. 👥 *227,700.* ✈ *12 km (7 miles) S of the city centre, then taxi.* 🚉 🚌 ℹ *Andhra Pradesh Tourism, Sridevi Complex (0877) 228 9120.* 🎉 *Brahmotsavam (Sep/Oct).*

The most popular destination for Hindu pilgrims in India, Tirupati is the site of the **Shri Venkateshvara Temple**, situated in the Tirumala Hills, 700 m (2,297 ft) above the town. The seven "sacred hills" of Tirumala are believed to symbolize the seven-headed serpent god Adisesha, on whose coils Vishnu sleeps. The temple dates to the 9th century, although it has often been expanded and renovated from the 15th century onwards.



Lord Venkateshvara, the presiding deity at Tirupati

The aura that surrounds Lord Venkateshvara (a form of Lord Vishnu, who is also known as Balaji) as the "Bestower of Boons" has made his temple the most visited and the richest in India. It eclipses Jerusalem and Rome in the number of pilgrims it attracts – around 25,000 a day, and up to 100,000 on festival days. The gold *vimana* and flagpole, and the gold-plated doorway into the inner sanctum, proclaim the temple's wealth. The jet-black stone image, 2-m (7-ft) high, stands on a lotus and is adorned with rubies, diamonds and gold. The deity also wears a diamond crown, believed to be the singlemost precious ornament in the world. He is flanked by his consorts, Sridevi and Bhudevi. The entrance portico has superb life-size images of the Vijayanagara king and queens *(see pp530–33)*, who worshipped Venkateshvara as their protective deity.

The entire complex is built to accommodate the huge influx of pilgrims, who come to seek favours from Lord Venkateshvara. This is one of the few temples in South India where non-Hindus are allowed into the inner sanctum. Devotees wait patiently in long queues for a special *darshan*, and make offerings of money, gold and jewellery that net the temple an annual income of nearly 1.5 billion rupees. The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam (TTD), which runs the temple, employs a staff of 6,000 to see to the pilgrims' needs and maintain the temple premises.

The temple complex includes a ritual bathing tank, and a small **Art Museum** with images of deities, musical instruments and votive objects. Surrounding it are green valleys and the Akash Ganga waterfall, which is the source of the holy water used for bathing the deity.

A unique feature at Tirupati is that many devotees offer their hair to the deity, and there are separate enclosures for this purpose. It is believed that since hair enhances a person's appearance, shaving it off sheds vanity as well. This offering is usually made after the fulfilment of a wish. The hair-offerings are later exported to the United States and Japan where they are made into wigs.

Most pilgrims stop at the small Ganesha shrine in the foothills, and at the **Govindarajaswamy Temple** in Tirupati town, before driving up the hill to the Tirumala shrine. This temple, which dates to the 16th–17th century, is dedicated to both Krishna and Vishnu. Built by the Nayakas, the successors to the Vijayanagar rulers, it is approached through a massive, grey outer *gopura* that dominates Tirupati's skyline, and is carved with scenes from the *Ramayana* *(see p27)*. An exquisite pavilion in the inner courtyard has carved granite pillars, an ornate wooden roof, and impressive sculptures of crouching lions. The temple has a magnificent image of the reclining Vishnu, called Ranganatha, coated with bronze armour. A short distance north of the temple is the **Venkateshvara Museum of Temple Arts**, with temple models, photographs and ritual objects.

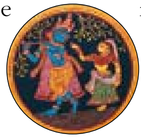
Shri Venkateshvara Temple

○ *daily. Darshan: 6-11am. Extra charges to join the shorter queue for special darshan of the deity.*

The main gateway to Govindarajaswamy Temple

Avatars of Vishnu

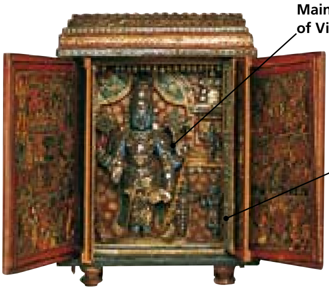
Vishnu, the second god in the Hindu Trinity, personifies the preserving power of nature. Seen as the most "human" of the gods and the redeemer of humanity, he is said to have appeared on Earth in several avatars or incarnations, whenever the cosmic order was disturbed. From the 2nd century, a new devotional worship of Vishnu's incarnation as Krishna developed in South India, and, by AD 1000, Vaishnavism had become widespread. At his most famous temple, in Tirupati, Vishnu is worshipped as Venkateshvara, the God who Fulfills Desires. Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth, is his consort.



Krishna, the eighth avatar of Vishnu

THE TEN INCARNATIONS

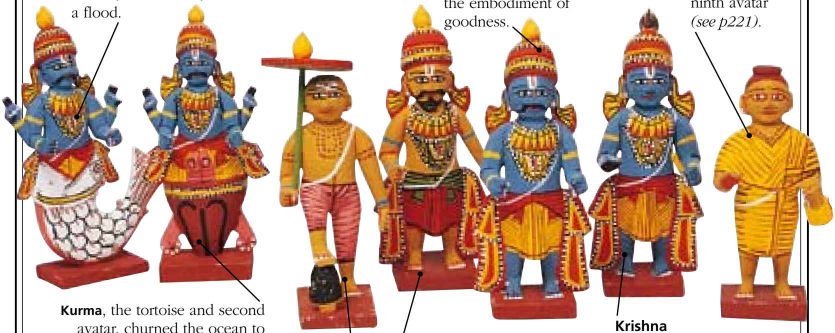
Vishnu descends to earth periodically, in order to redress the balance between good and evil. He is said to have ten main avatars, of which nine have already appeared; the tenth is yet to come.



Main image of Vishnu

Krishna, who came to free the world from oppression.

Kavad *is a portable wooden shrine, which shows Vishnu in his Krishna avatar, protected by the serpent Adi-sesha, and with his brother Balrama.*



Matsya, the fish and first avatar, rescued Manu (the first man) and the Vedas from a flood.

Rama, the seventh avatar, is the embodiment of goodness.

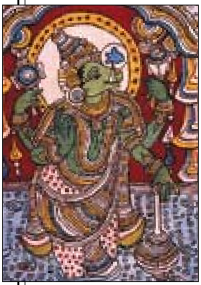
Buddha, is the ninth avatar *(see p221).*

Kurma, the tortoise and second avatar, churned the ocean to produce *amrita*, the divine nectar.

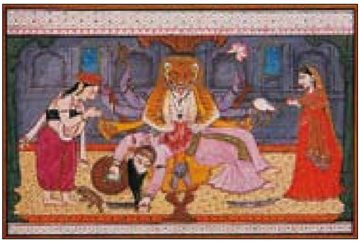
Krishna

Vamana, the dwarf priest and the fifth avatar, saved the world from a demon.

Parasurama, the sixth avatar, came to subdue the Kshatriyas who were overpowering the Brahmins.



Varaha, *the boar and third avatar, saved the earth from drowning in the ocean by lifting it up on his tusks.*



Narasimha, *the half-man, half-lion fourth avatar, killed the demon Hiranyakshipu and delivered the earth from his evil deeds.*

Kalki, *the tenth avatar, is still to come. Vishnu will then appear for the final destruction and will recreate the world in perfect purity.*

See also features on Hindu Mythology *(see pp24–5)*, Ganesha *(see p467)* and Shiva *(see p566)*.

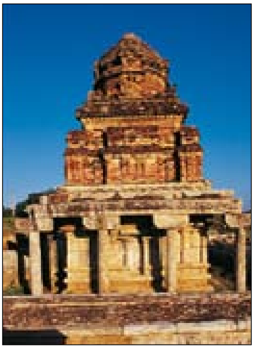
Rani Mahal, roofed by stepped pyramidal towers, at Chandragiri

Chandragiri ⑲

Tirupati district. 12 km (7 miles) W of Tirupati. 🚌 *from Tirupati.*

This small village was once an important outpost of the Vijayanagar kings. It later became the capital of the Aravidu ruler, Venkatapatideva (r.1586–1614), whose reign saw the decline of the Vijayanagar Empire.

Chandragiri's once glorious past is reflected in the massive walls of its late 16th-century fortress and some abandoned palaces. The most important of these is the **Raja Mahal**, which has an arcaded Durbar Hall and a domed pleasure pavilion. It was here that Sir Francis Day of the East India Company was granted land in 1639, in order to set up a factory in what later came to be known as Madras *(see p557)*. Nearby is the **Rani Mahal**, with its striking pyramidal towers, and its façade decorated with foliate and geometric motifs.



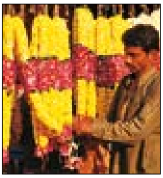
A temple next to the ruined palaces at Chandragiri

Sri Kalahasti ⑳

Chittoor district. 36 km (22 miles) E of Tirupati. 🚌 *from Tirupati.* *Temple Festival (Sep/Oct).*

Located between two steep hills, on the southern bank of the Svarnamukhi river, this town is one of the most important pilgrimage centres in Andhra Pradesh. Dominating one end of the crowded main street is a 36.5-m (120-ft) high free-standing *gopura*, erected in 1516 by Emperor Krishnadeva Raya of Vijayanagar *(see pp530–33)*. The royal emblems of the dynasty, depicting the boar and the sword together with the sun and the moon, are intricately carved on to the walls of this seven-storeyed towered gateway.

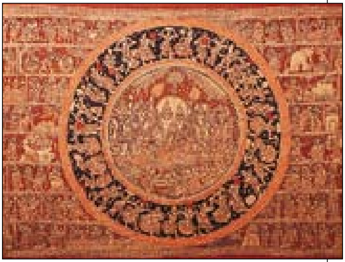
Nearby, similar but smaller *gopuras* provide access to the **Kalahastishvara Temple**, the town's main attraction, surrounded by a paved rectangular compound. A doorway to the south leads into a crowded enclosure of columned halls, pavilions, lamp columns and altars, connected by a maze of colonnades and corridors. Some of the columns are carved as rearing animal figures. In the north corridor are a set of bronzes of the 63 Shaivite saints called Nayannars *(see p45)*. The inner sanctum, opening to the west, enshrines the *vayu* (air) linga, one of the five elemental lingas of Shiva *(see p586)* in South India. It is a curiously elongated linga protected by a cobra hood, made of brass. According to a local legend, a spider, a cobra and an elephant worshipped the linga in their own special way. The spider first spun a web around it to protect it from the sun's



Flower seller at Sri Kalahasti

KALAMKARI FABRICS

Deriving their name from the word *kalam* for pen and *kari* for work, these brightly coloured cotton fabrics are produced at Machilipatnam *(see p672)* and Sri Kalahasti. Using a mixture of painting and dyeing techniques, figures of gods, goddesses, trees and birds are first drawn on the fabric, and then painted with a "pen" made of a bamboo stick padded at one end with cotton cloth. The traditional natural colours of ochre, soft pink, indigo, madder red and iron black are characteristic of *kalamkari* textiles. *Kalamkaris* from Sri Kalahasti were part of temple ritual and, like temple murals, depict mythological themes, with gods, goddesses and other celestial beings. The ones from Machilipatnam display a distinct Persian influence *(see p673)* and once formed part of a lucrative trade with Europe, dating back to the 17th century.



Kalamkari depicting Shiva and Parvati

View of Sri Kalahasti town, with its towering *gopuras* and the Kannappa Temple on a hillock

rays. The cobra, when he reached the shrine, was so upset to see the linga covered with dirty cobwebs that he cleaned and covered it with little stones. The last to arrive was the elephant, who removed the stones and decorated the linga with flowers. This continued for some time until the three devotees, each sure that his way of worship was the purest and that the others had committed sacrilege, decided to confront each other. In the fight that ensued, they collapsed and Lord Shiva, pleased by their devotion, blessed them and named the shrine after them – Sri (spider), Kala (cobra) and Hasti (elephant).

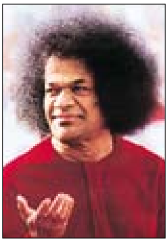
Sri Kalahasti is also linked to the legend of Kannappa, the hunter, through its **Kannappa Temple**. One of the 63 Nayannars, Kannappa plucked out his eye in a frenzy of devotion and offered it to Shiva. A shrine commemorating him stands on the summit of the hillock that rises to the east.

Worshippers have thronged to this temple for generations to seek relief from the "evil effects" of Saturn. Some pilgrims also come here with their unmarried daughters in the hope that a special *puja* at the temple will help them find good husbands.

Puttaparthi ㉑

Ananthapur district. 437 km (272 miles) S of Hyderabad. ✈ *6 km (4 miles) S of ashram, then taxi.* 🚉 *Dharmavaram, 40 km (25 miles) N of Puttaparthi, then bus.* 🚌 ℹ *APTDC, (08555) 289 565.* 🎉 *Sai Baba's Birthday (23 Nov).*

As the birthplace of Sri Satya Sai Baba, the "godman" who preaches religious tolerance, universal love and service to others, Puttaparthi has a very special significance for his vast number of devotees from all over the world. Sai Baba's ability to produce *vibhuti* (sacred ash), seemingly miraculously out of thin air, is considered by his devotees to be an important symbol of his godlike status and powers.



Sri Satya Sai Baba, a popular godman

From a very young age, Sai Baba, born as Satyanarayana Raju in this village on 23 November 1926, claimed divine powers. When he was only 14, he declared that he was the reincarnation of a celebrated saint, Sai Baba from Shirdi in Maharashtra, who died in 1918. It is believed that he will return after his death as another saint called Prem Sai Baba. In 1950 Satya Sai Baba established an ashram for his followers, whose numbers had swollen to gigantic figures. Known as **Prasanthi Nilayam** or the "Abode of Highest Peace", it is today a large complex with guesthouses, dormitories, kitchens and dining halls. Over the years, several buildings have appeared around the ashram – schools, colleges, residential complexes, hospitals, a planetarium, a museum and recreation centres, transforming this tiny village into a cosmopolitan township. Outside the ashram, at the lower end of the village, rural life continues, seemingly unaffected by the ashram's activities. The countryside around is very fertile, with stretches of well-irrigated fields.

Women working in the fields, Puttaparthi

The ornate *mihrab* of the Sher Shah Mosque, Penukonda

Penukonda ㉒

Anantapur district. 425 km (264 miles) S of Hyderabad. 🚌 🎉 *Babayya Fair (Dec).*

A rocky hill dominates Penukonda, or the “Big Hill”, with walls rising up its steep sides to form an almost triangular fort. A strategic Vijayanagar citadel from the 14th and to 16th centuries, Penukonda was the capital of the succeeding Aravidu rulers until it was captured, first by the Qutb Shahis, and then by, the Mughals followed by the Marathas. Today, gateways, watchtowers, dilapidated halls and shrines skirt the path to the summit.

At the foot of the hill is the walled city, with its main gateways in the northern and eastern sides. To the south is a large tank. The main monuments are situated along the city’s north-south road. The **Parsvanatha Jain Temple** here contains a remarkable sculpture, dating from the Hoysala period (12th–13th centuries), of the Jain saint Parsvanatha *(see p396)* standing in front of an undulating serpent. The 16th-century **Sher Shah Mosque**, nearby, has an arcaded façade and a bulbous dome.

Further south, standing next to each other, are two granite temples dedicated to Rama and Shiva. The pilastered façade walls of the **Rama Temple** are brought to life by carvings depicting episodes from the *Ramayana (see p27)* and the Krishna legend, while scenes from the Shiva mythology are sculpted on the walls of the **Shiva Temple**.

The adjacent **Gagan Mahal** is a palatial structure dating to the Vijayanagar period. An arcaded verandah leads to a vaulted hall with rear chambers. The domed pavilion above is topped by a pyramidal octagonal tower. A similar, smaller tower tops the adjoining staircase. To its east is a square pavilion with curving eaves, a pierced parapet and an octagonal pyramidal tower. The interior has traces of intricate plasterwork. Nearby is a well with an ornate entrance shaped like a lion.

A short distance north of the walled city is the **Dargah of Babayya**, the shrine of a 16th-century Muslim saint. A popular pilgrimage place which was much patronized by Tipu Sultan *(see p517)*, it holds a big fair in December.

Monolithic naga, Virabhadra Temple

Lepakshi ㉓

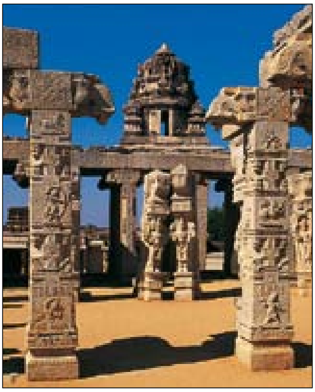
Anantapur district. 460 km (286 miles) S of Hyderabad. 🚌 ◒ *daily.* 🎉 *Shivratri (Feb/Mar).*

An enormous monolith of Nandi, Shiva’s bull, stands 1 km (0.6 miles) east of Lepakshi, welcoming visitors to this important pilgrimage town.

Lepakshi’s top attraction is the **Virabhadra Temple**, which stands on a rocky outcrop. It was built in the mid-16th century, under the patronage of two brothers, Virupanna and Viranna, governors of Penukonda under the Vijayanagar empire.

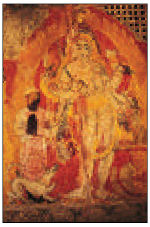
The temple is an important repository of the styles of sculpture and painting that evolved during this period. Dedicated to Virabhadra (Shiva in his ferocious form), the temple stands in the middle of two concentric enclosures, built on three levels. It is entered through a *gopura* on the north side. On either side of the inner entrance are figures of the river goddesses Ganga and Yamuna, with a background of foliage. Among the other notable sculptures here are the carvings on the massive pillars that define the central space in the open hall; the deities, guardians and sages carved on to the piers of the unfinished Kalyana Mandapa; and the imposing monolithic seven-headed *naga* (serpent) sheltering a granite linga, to the southeast of the main shrine. Paintings in vibrant vegetable and mineral colours cover the ceilings of the two adjoining *mandapas* (one open and the other walled in), the walls of the Ardha Mandapa and some subsidiary shrines. Gods and goddesses, groups of donors and worshippers, and scenes from myths and legends, bear witness to the superb pictorial art of the Vijayanagar empire.

A gory legend connected to the Virabhadra Temple says that Virupanna misused state funds to build this shrine, and then forestalled royal punishment by blinding himself. The two dark reddish spots on the western wall of the inner enclosure are said to be the marks left by his eyes.

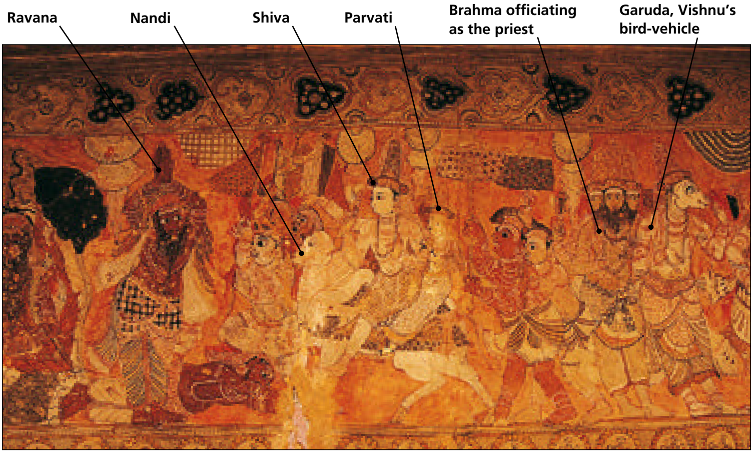


Carved pillars at the Virabhadra Temple

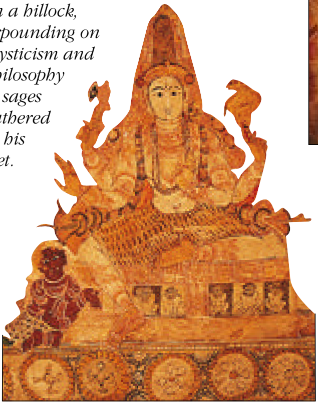
Lepakshi Paintings

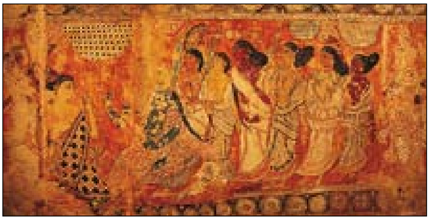

Lord Shiva as a mendicant

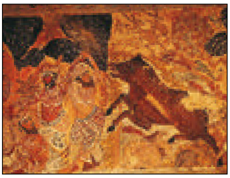
The glory of Lepakshi lies in the magnificent frescoed ceilings of the Virabhadra Temple, where a series of exquisite paintings illustrate in lively fashion episodes from the epics and the *Puranas*. The figures are shown in profile, with prominent eyes and sharply chiselled noses and chins. The frescoes are characterized by elegant black linework, set out against an orange-red background. Particularly striking are the beautiful costumes and the detailed rendering of hairstyles, textile patterns, and jewellery. The palette of colours is limited to white, green, black and various shades of ochre and brown, applied to a stucco surface specially treated with lime. Some of the most beautiful paintings are on the ceiling of the open *mandapa*, arranged in long strips along the surrounding bays.


Ravana
Nandi
Shiva
Parvati
Brahma officiating as the priest
Garuda, Vishnu's bird-vehicle

THE MARRIAGE OF SHIVA AND PARVATI
This is Lepakshi's most spectacular fresco, and echoes the murals at Ajanta *(see pp480–81)* in its colours, detailed depiction of costumes and jewellery, and graceful female figures.


Dakshinamurti *(Shiva as a Divine Teacher) is shown seated on a hillock, expounding on mysticism and philosophy to sages gathered at his feet.*


Parvati, *with her maids, is shown getting ready for the wedding. Flat figures in stylized poses, often arranged in rows, characterize these paintings.*


The Boar Hunt *shows a wild boar charging at Arjuna and Shiva, who are preparing to shoot him.*

TRAVELLERS' NEEDS

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WHERE TO EAT 718–743
SHOPS & MARKETS 744–747
ENTERTAINMENT 748–749
OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES & SPECIALIST HOLIDAYS 750–755

WHERE TO STAY

A wide choice of accommodation is on offer for the rising number of visitors to India – from modern Western-style deluxe hotels and grand old palaces to budget hotels and tourist bungalows. Prices vary accordingly, depending on the quality of services offered, and the location. Star-rated luxury hotels, speciality hotels, health spas and heritage hotels are expensive, but the amenities they offer more than justify the high room rates. The moderately-priced budget hotels, often managed by state tourism departments, may lack the glamour of a five-star, but they are clean and excellent value for money. Cheaper accommodation is available at guesthouses, youth hostels and even spartan pilgrim abodes, such as *dharamshalas* and ashrams. Hotel rates fluctuate with the season and are usually cheaper during the off-season from April to September. The hotel listings on pages 690–717 provide a selection of some of the best hotels throughout India, to suit every taste and budget.

Logo of an Oberoi luxury hotel

GRADING AND FACILITIES

At the top end of the scale are the five-star deluxe hotels. Most of these are part of international and Indian hotel chains, such as **Welcomgroup, Oberoi, Taj**, and the national India Tourism Development Corporation's (ITDC) **Ashok Group**. Many of the Ashok Group's properties, however, are now in the process of being sold to private operators. Next, are the four- and three-star hotels, many of them run by the state governments, followed by the cheaper guesthouses. The heritage hotels offer visitors a chance to stay in atmospheric, beautifully restored forts, palaces and stately homes.

PRICING AND BOOKING

The most expensive establishments are the five-star and five-star deluxe hotels as well as the exclusive heritage hotels, although the smaller properties among the latter can be cheaper. Accommodation in the bigger cities is generally more expensive. Rates can differ among the state-run hotels, which have a good nationwide network. Prices vary at guesthouses, and seasonal discounts mean that prices can go down by almost 50 per cent.

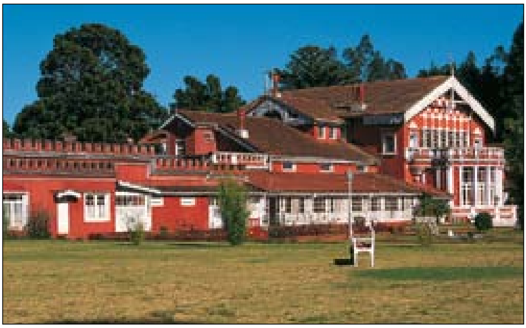
Tariffs are based on the European system of room rent only, although in some places breakfast is included. Flexible prices dominate the market during the off-season and it is worth negotiating for a good discount.

Foreigners have to pay the dollar room rate in some hotels which have a policy of dual tariff (for foreigners and Indians), plus any additional taxes on the listed price. This is payable in foreign currency or in Indian rupees. Hotel rates are usually revised every October, at the start of the tourist season. Many hotels, however, maintain the same rates as the previous year. Book well in advance during the peak tourist season (Oct–Mar). Since the classifications of hotels can be bewildering, it's best to get a complete description of what to expect in terms of both room and service quality. Getting a reservation confirmed in writing is a sensible precaution. While making reservations, especially for mid-range and budget hotels, do also check which credit cards are accepted. Note that some hotels demand payment in advance and will refund only part of it if the booking is cancelled.

Check-out time is usually 12 noon, though some hotels are more flexible and allow a 24-hour departure, or accept a small fee for a few hours' extension. Sometimes, some of the smaller hotels allow a later check out, for free. When paying, scrutinize the bill thoroughly and retain all receipts on departure.

TAXES

The hotel bill includes taxes levied by the federal and state governments. The federal government charges a uniform 10 per cent hotel expenditure tax (on room rent only), which is imposed on all hotels with a tariff of Rs 3,000 and above. States levy a luxury tax on room rent as well, and this varies from 5 to



The charming Raj-style Fernhill Palace Hotel in Ooty

◁ **Weekly market at Srirangapattana, Karnataka *(see pp516–17)***

Udaipur's opulent Lake Palace Hotel in the middle of Lake Pichola

25 per cent. There may also be local taxes such as sales tax, service tax and special taxes on alcohol, which vary from state to state. Some hotels also levy a service charge.

HIDDEN COSTS

Be prepared to pay extra for breakfast, the mini bar, mineral water, telephone calls, laundry, room service (if this is not a regular sevice), extra bedding, business centre usage, e-mails and faxes, concierge services and even pay channels on television. Transfers to and from the hotel are complimentary only for up-market package tours.

For non-local and international telephone calls, check if there's an in-house ISD/STD facility, though it's cheaper to use an STD booth *(see p770)* outside the hotel. Smaller hotels, with no running hot water, often charge extra for buckets of hot water.

LUXURY HOTELS

India's luxury hotels are comparable with the best anywhere in the world. They offer spacious suites and rooms, excellent service and a host of amenities. These usually include a travel desk, state-of-the-art conference facilities, shopping arcades, swimming pools, modern fitness centres, and multi-cuisine restaurants. The staff are very polite and attentive and can help plan itineraries and make arrangements for activities such as tennis, golf or riding. Reservations should be made in advance, especially during the peak season.

HERITAGE HOTELS

Several palaces, forts and *havelis*, particularly in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Gujarat, have been restored, modernized and converted into plush, luxury hotels. These establishments have a gracious, old-world charm, and many are still run by former princely families, who treat visitors like honoured guests.

Classified as Grand, Classic and Ordinary under the umbrella of the **Indian Heritage Hotels Association of India**, some can be booked through private agencies, such as **HRH Group of Hotels, Neemrana Hotels** and **WelcomHeritage**. Bookings at these hotels can also be made through well-known travel agents.

MIDDLE-RANGE HOTELS

The four- and three-star hotels offer a scaled-down version of five-star luxury and are less expensive. Levels of comfort, cleanliness and professional services are, however, high. Rooms are air conditioned and have attached bathrooms. In addition, there are restaurants, gift shops, business centres and sometimes extensive gardens for dining outdoors.

BUDGET HOTELS AND TOURIST LODGES

Budget hotels are often found around bus stands and railway stations. They are inexpensive, with simple decor, Indian or Western-style toilets, ceiling fans and basic food options in a dining hall. Enterprising proprietors sometimes offer e-mail services for a fee. The tariff in major cities is higher than in smaller towns.

An excellent option, particularly in lesser known tourist destinations, is the countrywide network of tourist bungalows and lodges run by the state tourism departments or the Ashok Group. Moderately priced, they offer both independent rooms with attached baths as well as dormitory accommodation.

DAK BUNGALOWS

Government-run dak bungalows (inns with very basic facilities) are cheap, clean, and conveniently located. Although not easily available for public use, visitors can contact the local or district authorities for help in making reservations. Book in advance as priority usually goes to visiting officials.

Cidade de Goa Beach Resort, designed by architect Charles Correa

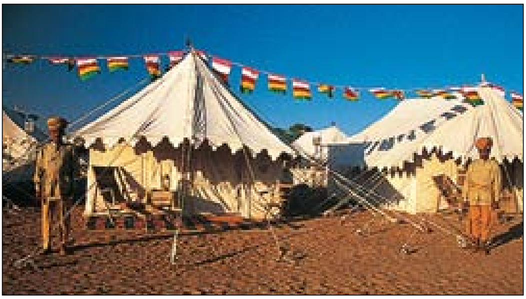
GUESTHOUSES, PAYING GUESTS AND HOME STAYS

In certain states, such as Goa, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, family cottages and old mansions have been converted (though sometimes only partially) into guesthouses. While these usually fall into the mid-range or budget categories, the number of amenities, quality of service and price can be erratic. Look at rooms before checking in, as the difference between one room and another for the same price can be substantial. The better ones have air-conditioned rooms, with attached baths and Western-style toilets.

Home stays with local families are becoming a popular option, especially in Kerala. It is best to check with the state tourism offices *(see p761)* for a list of establishments under their Paying Guest Scheme. Rajasthan Tourism has a comprehensive list, as does Madhya Pradesh Tourism. In Kerala, **Sundale Vacations** specializes in home stays. The UK-based **Munjeeta Travels** also organizes home stay tours across India.

DHARAMSHALAS AND ASHRAMS

Religious centres, among them *dharamshalas*, ashrams and monasteries, offer clean but basic accommodation all over the country. For most, prior booking is not essential and stay is often free, although donations are appreciated. It is wise to abide by the rules of the house and not offend any sentiments. Some ashrams in the older sections of town may provide only a mattress on the floor, which should suffice if the stay is just for a night. But be prepared to share rooms and bathrooms with others.


Luxury campsite at Pushkar during the annual cattle fair

Popular ashrams such as the **Sri Aurobindo Ashram**, the **Ramakrishna Mission** and the **Sivananda Ashram**, have branches spread across the country, and bookings must be made in advance. Their head offices can be contacted for details.

In Ladakh, many monasteries run hotels fairly close to their premises. One of the best is the **Lamayuru Monastery Hotel** which has a great setting within the compound *(see p138)*.

NATIONAL PARKS AND CAMPING SITES

Most National Parks and wildlife sanctuaries have forest rest houses with basic facilities. Since most of these are often reserved for forest officials, many of the larger parks now have plush private resorts located on their periphery. The most popular among these are in Ranthambhore (Sher Bagh), Corbett (Infinity Resorts), Kaziranga (Wildgrass) and Nagarhole (Kabini River Lodge). Reservations can be made through **Wild World India**, or through travel agencies. Camping is not allowed inside wildlife sanctuaries, and as a rule, it is not even safe to venture out for unguided walks.

Riceboat or *kettuvallam*, Kerala backwaters

Tented camps are provided by operators who organize adventure tours, such as river rafting along the Ganges *(see p185)*, or those that specialize in camping holidays *(see p752)*. Check the arrangements in advance, as some may not provide mosquito nets or mineral water. In Rajasthan, some hotels offer guests the option of staying in luxury tents set in spacious gardens. During the Pushkar and Kumbh *melas* (fairs), the state governments provide tented accommodation.

SPECIAL HOTELS

The rising interest in holistic health and well-being has spawned a number of exclusive health spas and specialized resorts. The most popular are those that offer herbal treatments, such as Ayurveda, and yoga. Other services include massage therapies, such as aromatherapy and reflexology, and meditation. Usually, a strict diet is part of the spartan regime, although rules at the top-end resorts are flexible. Raj Vilas and Amar Vilas of the **Oberoi** Group and

Ananda are world class spas. Kerala's *kettuvallams* (converted rice boats) are luxurious and have good services. Trips can be organized by **Tourindia**.

YOUTH HOSTELS

India has an excellent network of youth hostels. Although these are available at very low rates, they also tend to be packed. Members of the **Youth Hostel Association of India** and Youth Hostel International get priority bookings, but non-members can get a room for a higher fee. Both room and dorm-style accommodation is available. The **YMCA** is better equipped, though more expensive and located in fewer towns.

TOUTS

Visitors with no prior bookings should contact tourist counters at the airport, railway station or bus stand to avoid being harassed by touts, who also operate as taxi and auto-rickshaw drivers. Many are very persuasive and offer incredible discounts, all for a commission. Some, however, are genuinely helpful, and if there is no other option, keep the driver waiting until sure about the lodgings. Speak to a policeman if they become too persistent.

FACILITIES FOR THE DISABLED AND CHILDREN

Though facilities for the disabled are few, hotel staff are generally considerate. The government has recently initiated a move to add wheelchair ramps, special lifts and bathrooms wherever possible, although older properties, even the five-star hotels, may find it difficult to accommodate them.

Most hotels have no special amenities for children. However, Indian hotel staff are usually good with children and provisions can be made for extra beds. Only a few hotels offer baby-sitting services.

The impressive entrance foyer, Cecil Hotel, Shimla

TIPPING

Despite the inclusion of service charges in the bill, tips are expected in most places. The amount is discretionary. A tip of Rs10 is fine for parking attendants, room service and porters, but waiters expect ten per cent of the bill. Taxi drivers don't need to be tipped. However, tipping is a great way to get things done quickly.

DIRECTORY

HOTEL CHAINS

Ashok Group
ITDC, 7 Lodhi Rd, Delhi.
Tel *(011) 2436 0303.*
www.theashokgroup.com

Oberoi Group
Oberoi Maidens, Delhi.
Tel *(011) 2392 5464.*
www.oberoihotels.com

Taj Group
Taj Intercontinental,
Mumbai.
Tel *(022) 2202 5515.*
www.tajhotels.com

Welcomgroup
Maurya Sheraton, Delhi.
Tel *(011) 2611 2233.*
www.welcomgroup.com

HERITAGE HOTELS

Indian Heritage Hotels Association
Sansar Chandra Rd, Jaipur.
Tel *(0141) 237 1194.*
www.indianheritagehotels
.com

HRH Group of Hotels
City Palace, Udaipur.
Tel *(0294) 252 8016.*
www.hrhhotels.com

Neemrana Hotels
A-58, Nizammudin East, Delhi.
Tel *(011) 2435 8348.*
www.neemranahotels.com

WelcomHeritage
31, Siri Fort Rd, New Delhi.
Tel *(011) 2626 6650.*
www.welcomheritagehotels.
com

GUESTHOUSES, PAYING GUESTS & HOME STAYS

Munjeeta Travels
12 Cavendish Rd,
Woking, Surrey,
GU22 OEP, UK.
Tel *(01483) 773 331.*

Sundale Vacations
39/5955–A, Atlantis
Junction, MG Rd, Kochi.
Tel *(0484) 235 9127.*
www.sundale.com

DHARAMSHALAS & ASHRAMS

Lamayuru Monastery Hotel
Lamayuru Monastery,
Ladakh district,
Jammu & Kashmir.
Tel *No telephone.*

Ramakrishna Mission
Belur Math, Howrah
district, West Bengal.
Tel *(033) 2654 1144.*
www.sriramakrishna.org

Sivananda Ashram
Divine Life Society, PO
Shivanandanagar, 249192,
Tehri Garhwal District
Uttaranchal.
Tel *(0135) 243 0040.*
www.divinelifesociety.org

Sri Aurobindo Ashram
1 Goubert Salai
(Beach Road), Pondicherry.
Tel *(0413) 233 4836.*
www.sriaurobindoashram.
org

NATIONAL PARKS & CAMPING SITES

Wild World India
21, Kailash Hills,
New Delhi 110 065.
Tel *(011) 2691 4417.*
www.wildworldindia.com

SPECIAL HOTELS

Tourindia
PO Box 163,
Thiruvananthapuram.
Tel *(0471) 233 1507.*
www.tourindiakerala.com

YOUTH HOSTELS

YMCA
YMCA Hostel, 1 Jaisingh
Rd, PO Box 612, Delhi.
Tel *(011) 2336 1915.*
www.ymca.int

Youth Hostels Association of India
Vishwa Yuvak Kendra,
5, Nyaya Marg, Delhi.
Tel *(011) 2687 1969.*
www.yhaindia.org